



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

AH 6150 M

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL  
ANDOVER-HARVARD THEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY



From the collection  
of the  
UNIVERSALIST HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY











A  
**VINDICATION**

OF

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE NARRATIVES

CONTAINED IN THE

**First Two Chapters**

OF THE

**GOSPELS OF ST. MATTHEW & ST. LUKE;**

BEING AN INVESTIGATION

OF OBJECTIONS URGED BY THE UNITARIAN EDITORS OF THE  
IMPROVED VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT:

WITH

**AN APPENDIX,**

CONTAINING STRICTURES ON THE VARIATIONS BETWEEN THE FIRST  
AND FOURTH EDITIONS OF THAT WORK.

BY A LAYMAN.

[*John Evans*]

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR F. C. & J. RIVINGTON,

62, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,  
AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL,  
By R. Clay, Devonshire-st. Bishopsgate:

SOLD ALSO BY THE BOOKSELLERS OF OXFORD,  
CAMBRIDGE, &c.

1822.

BS  
2575  
B3

2377  
14

## PREFACE.

---

**T**HE Unitarian Improved Version of the New Testament may, perhaps, be considered by some as not claiming any further notice, after the works which have been already written, and ably written, to expose its fallacy and inconsistency; but a thorough knowledge of that Version—of its pretensions and of its authority—would suffice to convince them of the contrary. “I consider,” says Mr. Belsham, “the Improved Version as having completely answered its main object, which was, to serve as a sort of common-place book to the New Testament, by exhibiting to the inquiring and serious reader a plain and faithful account of the manner in which the most learned and approved Unitarian writers translate and explain the texts upon which the Unitarian

controversy hinges, and the grounds of their interpretation<sup>1</sup>.” Here is an extended and an important field of discussion; and the opinions advocated in the Improved Version are not to be considered as emanating from a private individual or individuals, but from probably the largest associated Unitarian body in the world—from the London *Unitarian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge*<sup>2</sup>; and the merit which the Unitarians attach to that work, corresponds with the pretended importance of the body under whose sanction it was formally introduced to the public. Under these circumstances, the inaccuracy of its representations, and the sophistry of its arguments, cannot be too fully exposed. Such an exposure is the more necessary, with reference to the particular point which is investigated in the following pages; because, if the Editors of the Improved Version have succeeded in the principles of criticism which they have adopted, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Monthly Repository for 1820, Vol. XV. pp. 213, 214.

<sup>2</sup> I am aware that this responsibility of the London Unitarian Society is not admitted by Dr. Lant Carpenter; but the public acts of a society cannot be annulled by any individual.

whole of the New Testament may, upon those principles, be rejected as a cunningly devised fable.

As the arguments and merits of this Work are quite independent of the Author, his name is unimportant; he has therefore considered it sufficient to declare that he is not a clergyman, in order to obviate that calumnious insinuation, which the Unitarian writers deal out with so little reserve, that the defenders of the orthodox faith are influenced by secular considerations.

The omission, in the present Volume, of the Additional Appendix, in answer to Dr. Lant Carpenter, which was promised in the latter Prospectuses and Advertisements of the Work, calls for an apology. The Author discovered, as he proceeded in his Reply to Dr. Carpenter, that it was impossible to do justice to his subject, and, at the same time, keep it within the limits of an Appendix to a work, to which it was irrelevant, and the price of which to Subscribers had been already announced before the Additional Appendix was even in contemplation. It has been therefore thought, on every account, most expedient

---



to publish the Animadversions on Dr. L. Carpenter as a separate work; the appearance of which, it is hoped, will not be delayed long after the publication of the present Volume.

The Author cannot close this Preface, without generally returning his acknowledgments to the Subscribers to his Work, and particularly to Archdeacon Blomfield, to whom he is indebted for his kind assistance in the progress of the Work through the press.

# CONTENTS.

---

## CHAP. I.

The importance of Religion, p. 1—Christianity the only true religion, and triumphant over all opposition, p. 2—The Scriptures too partially known by many, *ibid*—Infidel objections to them should, for the sake of such, be answered, p. 4—The Editors of the Improved Version reject, as unquestionably spurious, the narratives in the first two chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, *ibid*—The principles upon which they reject these narratives, assimilate with those upon which the Deist rejects the whole of the New Testament, p. 10—Proved, on the one part, by extracts from Paine, animadverting on the accounts of the Resurrection, *ibid*—On the other part, by extracts from Dr. Priestley, animadverting on the accounts of the Miraculous Conception, p. 20—Difference between the Unitarian and Deist, p. 26—The motive of the author, for investigating the evidence in favour of the authenticity of the Scriptures, p. 27—The result, so far as the Unitarian Improved Version is implicated, given in this Work, *ibid*—The plausibility of the remarks of the Editors, called for an argumentative refutation of them, p. 29—Extract from Porteus, Bishop of London, p. 30.

## CHAP. II.

The external evidence in favour of the Narratives in the first two chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, from the MSS. and Versions, p. 32—from the Apostolic Fathers, Extracts from the Epistles of *Ignatius* to the Smyrneans, Trallians, and Ephesians, p. 35—Mr. Belsham and Mr. Pope's objections to the evidence derived from Ignatius's Epistles, examined, p. 37, Note 6—Observations upon the evidence of the apostolical Fathers, p. 38—The evidence from the ancient Fathers, *Justin Martyr*, Extracts from his Apology, p. 39—from his Dialogue with Trypho, p. 40—Observations on the date of his Works, and of his character, p. 41—Animadversions on Mr. Belsham's objection to the evidence of Justin, p. 43—Mr. Pope's impeachment of the evidence of Justin, through Dr. Jortin, founded in misrepresentation, p. 45—Lardner's character of Justin's evidence, p. 55—*Hegesippus*, a Hebrew Christian, an extract from his Church History, p. 56—*Churches of Lyons and Vienna*, extract from an

Epistle addressed by them to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia, p. 57—*Irenæus*, extracts from, p. 58—*Tertullian*, extracts from, p. 59—*Origen*, extract from, *ibid.*—The evidence of the MSS. of the Versions, and of the apostolical and ancient Fathers, summed up, p. 60—The internal evidence in favour of these narratives—from the coincidence and substantial agreement between them, p. 61—Extract from Mr. Newcome Cappe, on the same, p. 63—from their piety and unaffected simplicity, p. 66—from their agreement with the histories of the times, p. 67—and with the prophecies of the Old Testament, p. 72.

### CHAP. III.

*Animadversions* on the attempts of the Unitarians to impeach the writers of the Introductory Chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, p. 74—Testimony of Celsus, p. 80—The objection urged by the Editors of the Improved Version, that the first two chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke were not in the Hebrew Gospel of the Nazarenes and Ebionites, examined, p. 85—Nazarene, a name not attaching to the primitive Hebrew Christians, *ibid.*—The Nazarenes and Ebionites not the same sect, p. 86—The Gospel used by the Nazarenes referred to, or quoted—by the Anti-Nicene Fathers, p. 88—by Eusebius, p. 91—by Epiphanius, and Jerome, p. 92—The Gospel used by the Ebionites, quoted by Epiphanius, p. 93—Several extracts from the Nazarene Gospel in Jerome's Works, adduced, p. 95—Extracts from Marsh's *Michaelis*, on the evidence of Jerome, *ibid.*, Note 20—A passage from the Ebionite Gospel, relating to the Baptism of Christ, as quoted by Epiphanius, and a passage relating to the same event in the Nazarene Gospel, as quoted by Jerome, prove, that in their time the same Gospel was not used by the Ebionites and Nazarenes, p. 100—The latter Gospel the least corrupt, p. 101—Difference between the sentiments of the Nazarenes and those of the Ebionites, *ibid.*—The Nazarene copy of St. Matthew's Gospel contained the introductory chapters of our Greek copy, p. 103—The reason of the Hebrew Gospels, used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites, having been sometimes confounded with each other, p. 105—A great historical blunder in the Ebionite Gospel, p. 106—*Michaelis's* animadversions on it, p. 107—Strictures on the Unitarian defence of this blunder, *ibid.*—A similar error committed by Celsus, p. 108—The probable origin of the blunder in the Ebionite Gospel, p. 111—This Gospel not written by Matthew, but a compilation, p. 112—Strictures on a Calm Inquirer's designation of the Ebionite Gospel, as the purest copy of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 113—The Editors of the Improved Version object to the authenticity of the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, that they were wanting

in the Gospel used by Marcion, p. 114—The sentiments of Marcion, p. 115—He refused to acknowledge Luke to be the author of his Evangelium, p. 117—The narrative in the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, inconsistent with the sentiments of Marcion, p. 118—The latter omits numerous passages in St. Luke's Gospel, besides the first two chapters, p. 119—The authority of Marcion's Evangelium overturned by Mr. Belsham himself, p. 120—The Editors' use of Marcion theological, and not critical, p. 121.

## CHAP. IV.

The argument of the Editors from Epiphanius's account of Cerinthus and Carpocrates, that the first sixteen verses of the first chapter of St. Matthew are genuine, examined, p. 123—Deserted herein by their favourite Ebionites, p. 126—Inconsistent with themselves, p. 127—No evidence that the Gospel used by Cerinthus and Carpocrates, did not contain the first two chapters of Matthew, *ibid.*—The Editors' assertion, that the first sixteen verses contradict the remainder of the first chapter of Matthew, controverted, p. 129—This position contradicted by the Editors themselves, *ibid.*—The propriety of Matthew's tracing Christ's legal descent from David, through Joseph, p. 130—The propriety of Luke's tracing Christ's real descent from David, through his maternal line, p. 131—Extracts from Dr. Adam Clarke, explanatory of the genealogical tables in St. Matthew and St. Luke, p. 132—Extracts from Dr. Adam Clarke's analysis of Dr. Barrett's disquisition on the same subject, designed to prove that St. Luke gives the genealogy of Mary, p. 134—The hypothesis of Africanus inconsistent with the law of levitation, p. 136, Note 4—The objections of the Editors, that if the account of the miraculous conception be true, Jesus could not be the offspring of David, controverted by the account itself, p. 137—The objection of other Unitarian writers, that the Virgin Mary's descent from David, could not prove Christ's descent from David, obviated, *ibid.*—that Christ could not be the Messiah predicted by the prophets, if miraculously conceived, refuted by the prophecies themselves, p. 139—and by the opinions of the Jews, p. 141—The conclusions drawn by the Unitarians, from Acts ii. 30, and Deut. xviii. 15, controverted, p. 142—Neither the Gnostic nor Unitarian views of the person of Christ accord with the page of prophecy, p. 145.

## CHAP. V.

The date of the commencement of Christ's ministry, in Luke iii. 1, presents no valid objection to the genuineness of the Introductory Chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, p. 146—The argument

adduced by Mr. Belsham on this point, p. 149—Josephus, and not Luke, the authority upon which the Editors of the Improved Version found their objection, p. 151—Examination of the testimony of Josephus, his works contain greater chronological errors than that urged by the Editors against the narratives of the Miraculous Conception, p. 153—Review from Lardner, of the leading events before and after the death of Herod, as connected with the evangelical history, p. 156—The data of Josephus reconciled with the evangelical narratives, by the fact of the joint empire of Tiberius with Augustus, p. 161—Lardner's proofs of this joint empire adduced against the objections of Mr. Belsham, p. 163—The objections urged by Mr. Belsham not new, but made before Lardner wrote, and refuted by him, p. 169—A review of Lardner's arguments, p. 170—Strictures on *A Calm Inquirer's* defence of the Editors, p. 177—Their representation of the age of our Lord, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, sufficiently indefinite to solve their own objection, p. 183—The calculation of the fifteenth year of Tiberius, in Luke iii. 1, most consistent with Josephus and the Christian writers, p. 184—On the date of the enrolment, Luke ii. 1, 2, p. 185—The principal difficulty attending it removed, by the Editors' adoption of Lardner's and Newcome's version of the passage, p. 186—The different explanations of this enrolment by the learned, *ibid.*

## CHAP. VI.

Objections to the events recorded in the first two chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, from the silence of contemporary writers, examined, p. 188—The notice of them by the heathen historians would have been more remarkable than their silence, p. 189—The silence of Josephus no valid objection, *ibid.*—Facts recorded by Josephus, which appear connected with these events, p. 191—Dr. Priestley's objection to Lardner noticed, p. 194, Note 5—Objection, that there is no allusion to these events in any other passage of the Sacred Writings, examined, p. 198—Allusion to the miraculous conception in the other Gospels, the Acts, and Epistles, p. 201—Attempt of the Editors of the Improved Version, to evade the obvious import of the Proem to St. John's Gospel, examined, p. 205—Strictures on their construction of *ἀρχή*, and an examination of its import in other passages of the Sacred Writings, p. 206—The assertion of the Editors, that *ἐγένετο* never bears the sense of create, disproved from the New Testament, p. 211—from the early Christian Fathers, and from the Greek profane authors, p. 212—from the Greek critics, heterodox and orthodox, and from the Improved Version itself, p. 213—Animadversion on the Editors' insertion of

πεφωτισμένοι after ἐγένετο, in John i. 10, p. 214—Summary Review of the Proem to St. John's Gospel, p. 215—Review of the different Unitarian expositions of this Proem, p. 217—Animadversion on Wakefield's Note on John i. 1, *ibid.* Note 18—Extract from Bishop Horsley, his discomfiture of Priestley, p. 218, Note 19—The authorised and Newcome's version of the Proem to St. John's Gospel confirmed by the Unitarian expositions, p. 222.

## CHAP. VII.

The Editors of the Improved Version deny that the phrase *Son of God*, as applied to Christ, has any allusion to the Miraculous Conception, p. 223—The apostle John, in opposition to the Gnostics, describes Christ as really the Son of God, and truly the Son of Man, p. 224—Strictures on the Editors' translating καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, the Word was a God, *ibid.* Note 2—Examination of the attempt of the Editors, to prove that John uses μονογενής, *only-begotten*, metonymically for ἀγαπητός, *beloved*, p. 225—Their reference to Heb. xi. 17, irrelevant, p. 227—Extract from Dr. Twell's, proving that ἀγαπητός is sometimes used metonymically for μονογενής, but never the latter for the former, p. 228—St. John does not use the word μονογενής on those occasions where the other Sacred Writers have used ἀγαπητός, p. 231—The apostle uses the word ἀγαπητός on similar occasions as the other Sacred Writers, p. 232—Ἀγαπητός probably used metonymically for μονογενής, when applied by the Sacred Writers to Christ, p. 233—The Proem to St. John's Gospel overturns the chimerical notions of the Gnostics, p. 234—The opposite opinions of the Cerinthians and Docetæ refuted by St. John, p. 235, Note 8—The word μονογενής, *only-begotten*, no more gross and improper in English than in Greek, p. 236—The Editors' attempt to attach a figurative sense to the phrase *Son of God*, in Rom. i. 4, destroys the antithesis used by the apostle, p. 237—They convert an inquiry into a plain matter of fact, into an inquiry into metaphors, and figures of speech, p. 240—The texts of Scripture, to which the Editors refer as proof that the phrase Son of God is equivalent to Messiah, or Christ, examined, p. 242—These phrases not considered as equivalent by the Jews, p. 245—The Editors' assertion, that Christ is called *a Son of God*, because he was raised from the dead, not supported by Scripture, p. 246—In what sense believers are called *sons of God*, p. 247—Examination of those Scriptures, where the Editors have substituted the indefinite for the definite article before Son of God, p. 249—Rom. viii. 3, and Gal. iv. 4, support the orthodox

and popular interpretation of the phrase *Son of God*, p. 255—The assertion of the Editors, in their Note on Rom. viii. 3, that Christ is called *God's own Son*, or *his beloved Son*, because he was the most distinguished of the prophets, unsupported by Scripture, p. 256—Their comment on the phrase, "in the likeness of sinful flesh," contrary to fact, p. 258—Strictures on the Editors' Notes on Gal. iv. 4; the orthodox interpretation does not depend on the word *sent*, p. 260—John i. 14 expresses the same meaning, without the word *sent*, p. 261—Job xiv. 1, xv. 14, xxv. 4, and Luke vii. 28, no proof that the phrase "made of a woman," in Gal. iv. 4, is a common Jewish phrase, to express a proper human being, *ibid.*—Jesus not uniformly spoken of as the son of Joseph and Mary, as the Editors assert, p. 264—Our Lord being called Jesus of Nazareth consistent with the evangelical accounts of his birth at Bethlehem, p. 265—Concluding Remarks, on the uniform designation of Christ as the Son of God, by the Evangelists and Apostles, as well as by himself, p. 266.

#### CHAP. VIII.

On the application of the phrase *Son of Man* to Christ, p. 267—The style of the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel vindicated from the objection, that it does not correspond with the other parts of St. Luke's writings, p. 269—An objection of the Editors of the Improved Version, originating in a misunderstanding of John i. 31—34, obviated, p. 270—The assertion, with a reference to Evanson's Dissonance, that there are many circumstances recorded in the Introductory Chapters of St. Luke, which wear an improbable aspect, investigated; namely, the name given to the angel who appeared to Zacharias and Mary, and the affinity between Elizabeth and Mary, p. 272—the consanguinity between John and Jesus, p. 275—the account of Simeon and Anna, p. 276—Luke's Prefatory Address to Theophilus, in his Acts of the Apostles, does not impugn the Introductory Chapters to his Gospel, p. 278—The Editors object, in their Note on Matt. i. 16, that some of the facts have a fabulous appearance. These facts, as enumerated by Evanson, considered; namely, the appearance of the Star to the Wise Men, p. 280—the slaughter of the infants by Herod, and the silence of profane history on this event, p. 283—The Editors' charge against the Introductory Chapters of Matthew, the inconclusive reasoning from the prophecies, examined—Matthew's application of the prophecy, in Isaiah vii. 14, to Christ, vindicated from the objections of Evanson, p. 284—Remarks on Mr. Belsham's interpretation of Isaiah vii. 14, p. 293—Matthew's application of the words of Hosea and Jeremiah to Christ, vindicated, p. 295—

Matthew's reference to the prophecy, that "he shall be called a Nazarene," vindicated from the objection, that there is no such prophecy. Prophetic declarations existed in the time of the apostles, which are now lost, p. 298—Some commentators, among whom is Dr. Priestley, think that Matthew alludes to no particular prophecy, but to the general language of the prophets, p. 299—Strictures on the attempt of the Editors to parry the objection, that so large and gross an interpolation, as the narratives of the Miraculous Conception, could not have escaped detection, p. 300—The early Christians vindicated from the charge preferred against them, of corrupting the text of the New Testament, p. 305—Every attempt to weaken or to destroy the Divine Authority of the New Testament will prove abortive, p. 306.

## APPENDIX,

*Containing Strictures upon the Variations between the First and Fourth Editions of the Improved Version of the New Testament.*

### APPENDIX, No. I.

The Editors of the Improved Version, in their new Note on Matt. i. 16, refer to Pope on the Miraculous Conception, as containing proof that the Nazarene Gospel of Matthew did not contain the first two chapters, p. 310—A review of Mr. Pope's arguments, his statement of Epiphanius's testimony incorrect, *ibid.*—Epiphanius ignorant of the manner in which the Nazarene Gospel began, *ibid.*—His statement of the beginning of the Ebionite Gospel does not accord with Mr. Pope's representation of it, p. 311—An examination of the passage in Jerome, quoted by Mr. Pope, to prove that the first two chapters of Matthew were not in the Nazarene Gospel, *ibid.*—From this passage it appears, that Jerome's copy contained the first two chapters, p. 317—The Editors advert to the objection of Dr. Magee against the evidence of the Ebionite Gospel, and call it "trifling in the extreme," *ibid.*—A review of the arguments of Dr. Magee, and of those of his opponents, p. 318—Mr. Belsham, in his answer to Dr. Magee, attempted to reply to these arguments, p. 329—The Unitarian confounds the evidence of the Fathers, with the evidence of the MSS., p. 331—Not a single MS. produced by the Editors, in favour of their rejection of the first two chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, *ibid.*—Epiphanius's report of the Ebionite Gospel, the Editors oppose to all the MSS. and Versions of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 332.



## APPENDIX, No. II.

The Editors of the Improved Version, in their new Note on Luke i. 4, correct their former assertion, that Marcion contended that his Evangelium "was a correct and authentic copy" of St. Luke's Gospel; but they nevertheless assert, that "his Gospel was undoubtedly that of Luke," p. 335—The Editors herein desert Marcion, to whose testimony they appeal, p. 336—Their assertion also controverted by Mr. Belsham, p. 337—Animadversions on Mr. Belsham's attempt to raise the authority of Marcion's Evangelium, by depreciating the evidence upon which our canonical Gospels are received as genuine and authentic, and on his calumny of the primitive church, p. 339—Animadversions on a similar calumny of the Editors, in a new Note in their Introduction, p. 341—An examination of the canonical authority of the Gospels, and of the argument of the Editors, that it was not established in the time of Justin, p. 344—The canonical authority of the Gospels established before the death of St. John, p. 346—The insinuation of the Editors, that the canonical authority of the Gospels was not settled before the time of Irenæus, unsupported by any evidence, p. 350—Strictures on Mr. Belsham's perversion of the language of Justin, p. 351—An extract from Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, proving the early establishment of the canonical authority of the Gospels, p. 355—The Editors only oppose conjectures and hypotheses, to the evidence in favour of the early reception of the Gospels as authentic, p. 358—Mr. Belsham's appeal to Luke's Preface to his Gospel, examined, p. 359—None but genuine and apostolical writings received by the primitive church, *ibid.*—The period between the apostolic age and that of Justin, too short to admit of the possibility of such large and gross interpolations, as the passages which the Editors reject, would have been, p. 361—That Marcion first formed his opinions, then composed a Gospel to correspond with them, admitted by Mr. Belsham, p. 362—From Marcion's knowledge of the account of the miraculous conception, it is probable that the Gospel of Luke, which he had seen, contained it, p. 364—Mr. Belsham's inconsistency in pleading the higher antiquity of a Gospel composed by Marcion, to the copy of Luke's Gospel, received by the Christian church, in the time of Tertullian, p. 365—Marcion's Gospel not formed on the same principles as that of St. Luke, p. 366—Not, as Mr. Belsham asserts, in some respects, more correct than that of St. Luke's, p. 368—This assertion, inconsistent with his own character of Marcion's Evangelium, Mr. Belsham endeavours to support, by the testimony of Michaelis and Marsh, *ibid.*—These critics do

not say what Mr. Belsham attributes to them, p. 369—Remarks on a new hypothesis, proposed for retaining as genuine, the whole of the first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, and on the Editors' reasons for rejecting it, p. 371.

## APPENDIX, No. III.

The Editors substitute, in the Fourth Edition of the Improved Version, Wakefield's Translation of Luke ii. 2, for Newcome's Version, adopted by them in their First Edition, p. 374—Animadversions on this Variation, and on the Editors' accompanying Note, p. 375—On their arraignment of Lardner's motives for adopting a version, first approved, although since rejected by themselves, p. 376—His translation the most consistent with the context, *ibid.*—Dr. Lant Carpenter's solution of the difficulty attending this parenthetical passage, p. 379—Animadversion on Dr. Carpenter's attempt to place this enrolment at a period subsequent to the death of Herod the Great, p. 380, Note 1—The difficulty attending this passage neither implicates the veracity of the evangelist, nor the accuracy of his narrative, p. 381—The charge against Lardner, for adopting a particular version to suit a hypothesis, not very consistently made by the Editors, who take greater liberties with the Greek original, in their rendering of John i. 10, Heb. i. 5, 8, and 1 Cor. i. 2, *ibid.*—Strictures on a vindication of the Editors' rendering of 1 Cor. i. 2, by a Writer in the Monthly Repository, p. 382—On the Editors' New Version of Rom. x. 13, p. 390.

## APPENDIX, No. IV.

The Editors make chronology conformable to their purpose, p. 392—Instances adduced, particularly their new Note on Acts ii. 22, p. 393—Their anachronisms pointed out, p. 394—Strictures on the inconsistency of some objections, made by Mr. Pope and Dr. Priestley, to the Introductory Chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, p. 396—Observations on some characteristic traits, overlooked by the Unitarian, which distinguish the Sacred Writings from every merely human composition, p. 401—These traits consequent on the doctrine of Divine Inspiration, p. 404.

**ERRATA :**

**Page 5, Note 1, for 'Vol. VI.' read 'Vol. IV.'**

**110, line 26, for 'of Celsus,' read 'in the Ebionite Gospel.'**

**242, — 25, for 'Suet.' read 'Tert.'**

# VINDICATION,

&c. &c.

---

## CHAP. I.

*The Importance of Religion—Christianity the only true Religion—Infidel Objections to it should, for the sake of Individuals, be answered—A comparative View of the Deistical and Unitarian Attacks on the New Testament—The Difference between the Sentiments of the Unitarian and Deist—The Motive of the Author, for investigating the Evidence in Favour of the Authenticity of the Scriptures—The Result, so far as the Unitarian Improved Version of the New Testament is implicated, given in this Work.*

**R**ELIGION—whether we consider the object of it, the Great Supreme, to whom we owe our existence, and from whom flow all our blessings—or the design of it, to make this portal of our existence an opening to eternal happiness and glory—challenges our best affections. “My son, give me thy heart,” says the voice of divine inspiration;

and the understanding, the intellectual principle, will necessarily accompany this surrender of the heart, and be ready to prove the reasonableness of devotion to God, of implicit obedience to his revealed will. With the heart so devoted, religion will not be a shadowy phantom, an undefinable something, which must give way to the more tangible objects of time and sense. No: with it religion will be embodied into that form which is presented in the Volume of Divine Revelation; it will govern its every pursuit—its every action.

The pleasures which are bounded by this sublunary scene of things, will be held in their due estimation, as phantoms which elude the grasp, and will sooner or later be found, by their deluded votaries, to be altogether lighter than vanity, and only productive of vexation of spirit.

This may be called enthusiasm and fanaticism: be it so;—the Christian is not to be intimidated by “the world’s dread laugh;” he has been taught to suffer shame for the name of Christ.—I say, *the Christian*; for where the light of the gospel has shone, christianity is the only rational system of devotion. Every opposition to it has had so little foundation in reason—has indeed exhibited such a perversion of the rational faculties, that it would be inexplicable, but for the known enmity the spirit of the world has to the ways of God, to the cross of Christ.

Triumphant as christianity always will be over

the attacks of infidelity, individuals too often sustain injury from these attacks. Of the majority I fear it may be said, with too much truth, that their time is so engrossed with philosophical, literary, or less laudable pursuits, that they have no leisure to make the Sacred Volume their study. They know, perhaps, little more of its contents than that which they imperfectly retain in their memory of what they read in their youth, before their judgment was sufficiently matured to comprehend its import; and yet, alas! they think they know enough of the most ancient and valuable records existing, when they would blush, if they possessed no more knowledge of any of the heathen classics.

There is another, and a very different class of persons, who are, I fear, not sufficiently guarded against the attacks of infidelity:—I mean the devout and pious, who reverence the Scriptures. But then their perusal of them is, perhaps, chiefly confined to certain devotional parts of Holy Writ—a perusal too bounded to embrace the various dispensations of God to mankind, as displayed in the Sacred Writings.

The first class I have been describing, are already predisposed to listen to sceptical objections to the divine authority of the Scriptures, in order to justify their neglect of the Sacred Volume, and their practical rejection of its precepts. The second class are indeed attached to Divine Revelation, as administering the consolations of religion

to the mind; yet their knowledge of the Sacred Volume is too partial, too limited, to enable them to detect the plausible, but sophistical, objections of the sceptic.

Thus it appears, that however uninviting the thorny paths of controversy may be, to avoid them would, in some instances, be a dereliction of duty. As every attempt to weaken the faith of mankind, in the truth of Divine Revelation, is injurious to the best interests of society, it should be exposed in its true colours; to take from the indifferent their plea for irreligion, to confirm the pious christian in his faith, and to prevent him from being misled by the artifices of infidelity.

It is really to be regretted that any, professing the christian name, should suffer themselves to be induced by a party spirit, to make an attack upon considerable portions of the received text of the New Testament—an attack which would, if successful, shake the evidence upon which the divine authority of the whole is received: for such is the complexion of the attempt made by the Editors of the Unitarian Improved Version of the New Testament, to expunge from the canon of scripture the last nine verses of the first chapter, and the whole of the second chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and the first two chapters of the Gospel of St. Luke, except the introductory address to Theophilus, in the first chapter. And the design of the following Work is, to repel this

attack, and to vindicate the canonical authority of those portions of the New Testament.

A writer under the signature B. has urged, on behalf of the Editors, that "they have not expunged or altered a single line;"—that "the chapters in question are printed in their usual place; but those parts of them, the genuineness of which has been disputed by critics of great repute, are printed in italics, and the arguments for and against the question are calmly stated at the foot of the page<sup>1</sup>." It is indeed true, that not a single line is expunged or altered; that the chapters in question are printed in their usual place. This is what the acknowledged evidence of all the manuscripts and versions in their favour demanded; and this evidence demanded more still—it demanded that no mark, of doubtful authority should appear in the text against any part of these chapters.

But whatever deference the Editors may have evinced for the evidence in favour of the chapters in question, this deference is confined to the text. In their note on Matt. i. 16, the Editors inform us, that what Luke says, chap. iii. 23, is "a circumstance, which alone invalidates the whole story." And in the fourth edition of the Improved Version, in a new note on Luke ii. 2, they pronounce "the whole story a fabrication." Again, in another new note on Luke ii. 22, they confidently assert that "both accounts cannot be

---

<sup>1</sup> Monthly Repository, Vol. VI. p. 415.



true; and in fact, neither of them is worthy of credit."

Such language cannot certainly be characterised as a *calm* statement of the arguments against the question; it is peremptorily deciding that the narratives are spurious upon an *ex parte* statement. For it is not true that the arguments for the authenticity of the disputed chapters are calmly stated at the foot of the page: they are not stated at all. On the contrary, with a disingenuousness characteristic of the Unitarian polemic, the Editors, in their note on Matt. i. 16, so refer to Lardner, that the reader would conclude they had the name of that learned man, in favour of their principal argument against the authenticity of the chapters in dispute.<sup>2</sup> It is true, that Lardner has stated the chronological difficulty urged by them, and that he has, with his usual candour, given it its full force; but then he has only so stated the difficulty to solve it, and to show that it presented no real objection to the evangelical narrative.<sup>3</sup> With whatever contempt the Editors, or Mr. Belsham, may view Lardner's solution of the difficulty, they were bound, in common honesty, to state it, and then their readers could have judged for themselves which dealt most in "mere gratuitous suppositions," and "vague hypotheses,"—the learned and elaborate Dr. Lardner, or the Editors of

---

<sup>2</sup> See Chap. V.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the Improved Version, and their advocates, "A Calm Inquirer," and Mr. Belsham.

In his Reply to Dr. Moysey, Mr. Belsham says, p. 85, "Dr. Lardner has abundantly proved that Herod died at least seventeen years before Augustus. Here Lardner's testimony ends. But a greater than Lardner, the Evangelist Luke (chap. iii.), tells us, what these gentlemen are very unwilling to learn, 'that Jesus began to be thirty years of age, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius,' and consequently, that he was born only fifteen years before the death of Augustus; that is, two years at least after Herod's death. This is plain matter of fact.—With the vague hypotheses which Lardner, as well as others, have brought forward, to reconcile facts that are evidently contradictory, the Editors of the Improved Version have no concern. They abide by the plain, intelligible, uncontradicted assertion of Luke, and renounce the heathen fable of the miraculous conception."

I cite this passage, as proof that I do not exaggerate, when I say, that the Editors have rejected, without any reservation, as gross forgeries and interpolations, the narratives of the miraculous conception in Matthew and Luke; for it is impossible to express this sentiment in stronger or more definite language, than is here used by one of the Editors on their behalf, that they "renounce the heathen fable of the miraculous conception."

This passage is also a specimen of that kind of criticism, by which the Unitarian theologian evades a controverted point, instead of answering it; and, by a few confident assertions, in which accuracy is not consulted, places the wreath of victory on his own brow. I shall not detain the reader by exposing, in this place, the chronological and other errors with which the above cited passage abounds, but refer him to the fifth chapter of this Work; by which it will appear, that what Mr. Belsham calls "a plain matter of fact," is only an erroneous deduction from data furnished by Josephus. I cannot, however, pass over in silence Mr. B.'s remark upon Lardner; whose testimony, or rather argument (for he does not adduce his own, but the testimony of others, from a review of which he draws his conclusions), does not end at his calculation of the time of Herod's death: he afterwards adduces the testimonies of *Velleius*, *Paterculus*, *Suetonius*, *Tacitus*, and *Dio*, from which he proves that Josephus's account of the time of Herod's death does not impugn the accounts given by St. Matthew and St. Luke of the time of the birth of Christ. The Editors and their advocate find it, no doubt, more convenient to call these proofs *vague hypotheses, with which they have no concern*, than to engage in the Herculean labour of answering and refuting them; and they would wish their readers to be satisfied with this brief and convenient method of disposing

of a troublesome argument. But these are not the days of implicit faith; neither are all readers Unitarians, who are sufficiently disposed to receive the decisions of their leaders, on *orthodox opinions*, as "confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ."

By the foregoing extracts it is placed beyond doubt, that the Editors of the Improved Version reject, as unquestionably spurious, the greater part of the first chapters and the whole of the second chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, and take no little pains to make the same impression on the minds of their readers. Of the objections urged by the Unitarians to these chapters, those derived from the evidence of the Ebionites and Marcion, against the external evidence of all the manuscripts and versions in favour of the said chapters, might be extended to other parts of the New Testament; for, without discussing in this place the liberty claimed by the Editors, of arbitrarily selecting so much as they please, and no more, of the evidence of these said Ebionites, and of Marcion, on the authenticity of the books and of the text of the New Testament, they cannot deny that other persons, claiming and exercising the same liberty of selection, might, from the same evidence, reject all the books of the New Testament: and however the Editors, and their advocates, may endeavour to blink the question, such is the legitimate result of their appeal to the evidence

of the Ebionites, and of Marcion; for, if admitted at all, it involves in doubt the authenticity of the whole of the New Testament.<sup>4</sup> The objections of the Unitarian to the chapters in dispute, which relate to the internal evidences, resemble the objections urged by Paine, in his *Age of Reason*; the main difference being, that Paine extends to the whole of the Gospels, objections which the Unitarian applies only to certain portions of them.

The Unitarian may be offended with having his objections to the present received text of the Sacred Writings represented as assimilating with those of the Deist. Whether he be pleased or displeased, such is the fact. I will prove this agreement between them. Paine says, "The disordered state of the history of these four books [the Gospels], the silence of one book upon matters related in the other, and the disagreement that is to be found among them, implies, that they are the productions of some unconnected individuals, many years after the things they pretend to relate, each of whom made his own legend; and not the writings of men living intimately together, as the men, called apostles, are supposed to have done."

These observations are preceded, as well as followed, by objections to the accounts of the miraculous conception; but I wave any discussion of these objections in this place, and pass on to

---

<sup>4</sup> See Chap. III. of this Work.

Paine's strictures on the evangelical accounts of the resurrection and ascension of Christ; because there is no part of the evangelical narratives, with respect to which the Unitarian will more cordially admit the invalidity of Paine's attack upon them, and consequently no part so likely to convince him of the unreasonableness of his own opposition to the first two chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke.

"The tale of the resurrection," says Paine, "follows that of the crucifixion; and in this, as well as in that, the writers, whoever they were, disagree so much, as to make it evident that none of them were there. The book of Matthew states, that when Christ was put in the sepulchre, the Jews applied to Pilate for a watch or guard, to be placed over the sepulchre, to prevent the body being stolen by the disciples; and that, in consequence of this request, the sepulchre was made sure, sealing the stone that covered the mouth, and setting a watch. But the other books say nothing about this application, nor about the sealing, nor the guard, nor the watch; and, according to their accounts, there were none."

This is not true; the other books do not say there were none of these things,—they are indeed silent concerning them: but "omissions are not contradictions, nor silence, concerning a fact, a denial of it." The specific objection of Paine, in the above passage, to the truth of Matthew's

relation of the resurrection of Christ, is exactly similar to an objection urged by the Editors of the Improved Version, against the accounts of the miraculous conception, that "there is no allusion to any of these extraordinary facts in either of the succeeding histories of Luke, or in any other books of the New Testament." The principal difference between the objection of Paine and that of the Editors, is, that the premise of the latter is not, like the former, correct, because, 1st, The present copies of Luke's Gospel contain some of these extraordinary facts; the only other history written by Luke is, his *Acts of the Apostles*. In this latter history, Luke refers Theophilus, whom he addresses, to his Gospel. Therefore, it neither comported with his design, nor was it necessary, to repeat in his *Acts of the Apostles* the facts contained in his Gospel. If the Editors include the Gospel of Luke, when they say, "in the succeeding histories of Luke," they are practising a deception upon the reader, or begging the question in dispute. 2dly, That there *are* allusions to the miraculous conception in the other books of the New Testament, is abundantly proved in the following Work.

"The book of Matthew," says Paine, "continues its account, and says, (chap. xxviii. 1) that at the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn, towards the first day of the week, came *Mary Magdalene* and the *other Mary* to the sepulchre. Mark says it was sun-rising, and John says it was

dark; Luke says it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and *Mary the mother* of James, and the *other women*, that came to the sepulchre; and John states, that Mary Magdalene came alone. So well do they agree about their first evidence!" "The book of Matthew goes on to say, (ver. 2) 'And behold there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and *sat upon it!*' But the other books say nothing about any earthquake, nor about the angel rolling back the stone, and *sitting upon it*; and, according to their accounts, there was no angel *sitting there*. Mark says the angel was *within the sepulchre*, sitting on the right side. Luke says there were two, and they were both standing up; and John says, they were both sitting down, one at the head, and the other at the feet. Matthew says, that the angel that was sitting upon the stone, on the outside of the sepulchre, told the two Marys, that Christ was risen, and that the women went *away* quickly. Mark says, that the women, upon seeing the stone rolled away, and wondering at it, went *into* the sepulchre; and that it was the angel that was sitting within on the right side, that told them so. Luke says, that it was the two angels that were standing up; and John says, it was Jesus Christ himself that told it to Mary Magdalene, and that she did not go into the sepulchre, but only stooped down and looked in. Now, if the writers of these four



books had gone into any court of justice, to prove an *alibi*, (for it is of the nature of an *alibi* that is here attempted to be proved, namely, the absence of a dead body by supernatural means), and had given their evidence in the same contradictory manner as it is here given, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropped for perjury, and would have justly deserved it."

Paine confounds historical with legal evidence. Apparent discrepancies upon subordinate points may be admissible in the former, which would not appear in the latter; the minutiae of which, could it be taken on the subject before us, would, I have no doubt, remove the apparent disagreements between the historians, occasioned by their accounts being compressed, and expressed in general terms. Of the four Evangelists, Matthew and John, as apostles, were competent witnesses to Christ's appearances to his disciples after his resurrection, when they were present. Yet their evidence, with respect to the appearance of the angels and of Jesus to the women, is only historical. John, indeed, saw Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre before she had seen the angels or Jesus; he has also recorded these appearances; but it is plain, from his own account, that he was not then present.

According to the best information we have of Mark and Luke, they were not converted to the christian faith till after the resurrection of Christ; though they were contemporary and intimate with

those who had seen Christ after his resurrection; the evidence afforded by their Gospels on this subject, is therefore historical, and not that of eye-witnesses.

If the evangelists have evinced the fidelity of impartial historians, they have done their duty, they have done all that the most inveterate infidel can *rationaly* demand of them. The four Gospels afford all the proof of the resurrection of Christ, that can be expected from four unconnected narratives. They present substantial coincidence under circumstantial variety, by which the truth of the evangelical narratives is more confirmed, than if there were such a minute coincidence between them, as might lead to a suspicion of a confederacy between the writers.

It is the brevity observed by the evangelists, in their relation of the occurrences which transpired between the resurrection and ascension of Christ—that is, during a period of forty days—which has supplied Paine with those seeming discrepancies, which he endeavours to magnify into real objections to the truth of the narratives. Paine seems, from the manner in which he states his objections, to suppose, that each evangelist has related all he knew of the appearances of Christ to the women or to his disciples, after his resurrection: if he had, in his examination of the New Testament, been influenced by any other motive than an inveterate hatred of christianity, he must, upon the first comparison

of the narratives with each other, have detected his error, and have been prevented from falling into another, that would have disgraced a school-boy : —I allude to his representing the forty days that elapsed between the resurrection and ascension, as “but a few days, apparently not more than three or four.”

It appears incidentally, from Luke xxiv. 34, as also from 1 Cor. xv. 5, that Christ appeared to Peter the same day on which he rose from the dead; but of this appearance Luke gives no particulars; neither is it mentioned by any other evangelist. From the Gospel of John it is evident, that Mary Magdalene went more than once to the sepulchre, before she saw either the angels or Jesus; it might therefore have been yet dark when she first went, although it was sun-rise when the other women afterwards went. Of this first visit of Mary Magdalene, the other evangelists are silent, though they speak in general terms of her visit, and that of the other women to the sepulchre. All the evangelists mention the angel's appearance to Mary Magdalene; three of them mention the appearance of Jesus to her; one says that he appeared to the other women also. They all mention his subsequent appearance to his disciples; but from John, in his Gospel, and from Luke, in his Acts of the Apostles, it is evident, that many of Jesus's appearances to his disciples are not recorded in any of the Gospels: so far are the evangelists from even professing to

relate all they knew of the events that occurred between the resurrection and ascension of Christ. This brevity of the evangelical narratives sufficiently accounts for the discrepancies objected against them.

The flippancy of Paine's animadversions, and the notorious blunders he has fallen into himself, in his attempts to convict the evangelists of error, are ably exposed by Dr. Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, in his "Apology for the Bible;" a work that is now accessible to every body, in consequence of the cheap form in which it is printed by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge. To it I therefore refer the reader.<sup>5</sup>

Before I quit the subject of the resurrection of Jesus, I shall make a remark upon what Matthew says of the guard of soldiers placed over the sepulchre. A more effectual precaution to prevent imposition, from a pretended resurrection of Jesus, could not have been devised; consequently, the chief priests and leading men of the Jews could not have had a more satisfactory proof of the reality of the resurrection of Jesus, than the evidence of the Roman soldiers, who, as heathens, could have no interest to induce them to connive at such a gross imposition by the disciples, especially as a detection of such connivance would have been at the peril of their lives. The fact is related by Matthew with the most artless simplicity. The

---

<sup>5</sup> See Watson's Apology, Letter VIII.

expedient resorted to by the chief priests and elders of the Jews, to avoid the publicity of the fact, however absurd, was the only one that could be contrived to keep up their credit and authority with the people, by preventing the soldiers from exposing the real state of the case.

No subsequent appearance of Jesus, unaccompanied by the evidence of his actual resurrection from the grave, could have been, to the chief priests, so convincing as this latter fact by itself. The Jews themselves were witnesses to the resuscitation of Lazarus by Jesus. This fact being thus established by the strongest evidence, they could not afterwards doubt whether it was Lazarus himself, or an impostor resembling him, who appeared among them. Equally conclusive to the chief priests must have been the evidence of the Roman soldiers to the resurrection of Jesus. Notwithstanding such irrefragable evidence for the resuscitation of Lazarus, and for the resurrection of Jesus, they obstinately persisted in their rejection of the Messiah; and God gave them up to their own ways and devices, which led to their destruction, and that of the Jewish polity and state.

As I have given a specimen of Deistical argument from Paine, so I shall give a specimen of Unitarian argument from Dr. Priestley; and shall introduce it with some remarks of Dr. Priestley, on the scriptural evidence for the resurrection of Christ.

"It is universally acknowledged," says the Doctor, "that the less reason there is to expect any particular event, the stronger evidence it requires. A slight evidence is sufficient to certify of such facts as happen every day, or very frequently. Miracles require much stronger evidence; and, accordingly, such evidence has always been provided.—Thus, the resurrection of our Saviour being the most extraordinary, and, *à priori*, the most improbable of all events, approaching the nearest to an impossibility, the evidence of it is remarkably circumstantial; in consequence of which, there is not, perhaps, any fact, in all ancient history, so perfectly credible, according to the most established rules of evidence, as it is."<sup>6</sup>

I cordially agree with Dr. Priestley, in the conclusion he has drawn from the evidence afforded by the New Testament, of the credibility of the fact of the resurrection; but I must dissent from his opinion, that the relations, by the evangelists, of our Saviour's appearances to his disciples, after he rose from the dead, are "*remarkably circumstantial*;" for these appearances, and their effect on the minds of the disciples, constitute, I consider, the principal evidence of the resurrection. On the contrary, they are remarkably concise; and to this conciseness only is to be attributed those apparent disagreements which the Deist

---

<sup>6</sup> History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ, Vol. IV. pp. 18, 19.

endeavours to magnify into real and irreconcilable discrepancies, but which, as they remove every suspicion of collusion and fraud between the writers, more establish the truth of the evangelical narratives, than if they had been so “remarkably circumstantial,” as to produce such a minute agreement, as might have shaken our confidence in their fidelity.

The following objections of Dr. Priestley, to the evangelical accounts of the miraculous conception, are given as a counterpart to Paine’s objections to the evangelical accounts of the resurrection:—

“The two histories of the miraculous conception, are themselves remarkably different from each other; and though it may be possible to contrive a scheme by which they may be reconciled, yet there are such capital circumstances in each of the accounts omitted by the other, as it can hardly be supposed would have been omitted, if the writers had been acquainted with them. Would Luke, for instance—have omitted—the visit of the wise men of the East, the massacre of the children, and the journey into Egypt? Or would Matthew—have omitted all the particulars of the speeches of the angels, the story of the shepherds, the prophecies of Simon and Anna, to say nothing of the whole history of the birth of John the Baptist? The narrative of Luke is so far from coinciding with that of Matthew, that it is hardly

possible to find any room for the journey into Egypt. According to Luke, Jesus was presented at Jerusalem as soon as the days of Mary's purification were expired, and then returned directly to Nazareth, without going any more to Bethlehem, where, indeed, it does not appear that Joseph had any habitation or friends; so that the wise men of Matthew, who are supposed to have found the child at Bethlehem, must have arrived in the country long after Mary had left the place. On the contrary, Matthew must have supposed that Jesus was kept at Bethlehem near two years after his birth, and was carried from thence into Egypt. Indeed, one cannot help inferring, from the account of Matthew, that Joseph and Mary were properly of Bethlehem, that they did not settle in Nazareth till after their return from Egypt, and that they made choice of this place, as being out of the territory of Archelaus, the son of Herod. Had Matthew supposed Jesus to have been at Nazareth, in Galilee, at the time of his persecution by Herod, he would hardly have thought of sending him to Egypt, as a place of safety, when, in order to come thither, he must have passed through the whole extent of Herod's dominions; but would rather have sent him to Tyre, or some part of Syria, bordering upon Galilee."<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> History of Early Opinions, Vol. IV. pp. 117—119.



Of these objections, there is not one which proves a contradiction between the evangelists; they only prove—what nobody will deny—the omission of events by one evangelist, which are recorded by the other. The omissions objected to the evangelists, relate, first, to events connected with the miraculous conception;—secondly, to events subsequent to the birth of Jesus.

Matthew and Luke both relate that Mary, whilst a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit. Matthew does not mention any previous divine communication to Mary by an angel; but the fact itself, as related by him, must presuppose some such communication, if it had not been recorded by Luke. Matthew relates the manner in which Joseph received satisfaction with respect to the cause of the situation of the virgin: this is not mentioned by Luke. But here again, from the nature of the case, if it had not been on record, it must be obvious to common sense, that Joseph must have been so satisfied before he would have taken Mary as his wife. Both the evangelists agree that Jesus was born at Bethlehem. Of the previous abode of his parents, Matthew is silent; Luke says it was at Nazareth, and mentions the circumstance that brought them to Bethlehem. Here is a remarkable substantial coincidence in the main facts, which prevents any real discrepancy between the two narratives.

When Matthew passes over in silence the presentation of the child Jesus at the temple, forty days after its birth, according to the law of Moses, he could not suppose that his reader would infer, from such silence, that the parents of Jesus failed in any of the ceremonies prescribed by the law. As Matthew has not mentioned the presentation of Jesus, he has *consequently* omitted the occurrences that then took place, related by Luke. These occurrences have no connexion whatever with the miraculous conception; and the omission of them by Matthew no more affects the credibility of the narrative of Luke, than Matthew's omission of the restoration to life of the widow's son at Nain, by Jesus, affects the credibility of this miracle, as recorded by Luke. Again: Matthew's omission of the circumstances attending the birth of John the Baptist, no more invalidates Luke's account of them, than the silence of Matthew, Mark, and John, invalidates the assertion of St. Luke and St. Paul, that Jesus appeared to Peter on the day of his resurrection.

The wise men's visit to Judea, recorded by Matthew, and the incidents consequent upon it, are omitted by Luke; but then, as this visit occurred several months after the birth of Jesus, and is entirely unconnected with the miraculous conception, Luke's omission of it neither lessens the credibility of this latter event, nor invalidates Matthew's account of the visit of the wise men,

any more than the silence of Mark, Luke, and John, respecting the guard set by Pilate over the sepulchre of Jesus, invalidates Matthew's account of that important circumstance.

“ But the wise men of Matthew,” says Priestley, “ who are supposed to have found the child at Bethlehem, must have arrived in the country long after Mary had left the place.” Matthew does not say that the wise men went to Bethlehem; it has only been inferred, from his omission of the name of the place towards which they directed their course, that it was Bethlehem. From a similar omission in Matthew, it might be inferred, if we looked no further than his Gospel, that our Saviour's last interview with his disciples, after his resurrection, was at Galilee, and that this interview took place within a few days after his resurrection; but if we turn to the two histories of St. Luke, we find that Jesus's last interview with his disciples, before his ascension, was in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and that he had had frequent previous converse with them for the space of forty days. The difficulty in either case is only occasioned by the conciseness of the narrative of the evangelist.

Matthew had no more to do with sending Jesus to Egypt, whether he supposed his residence to be at Bethlehem or at Nazareth, than Dr. Priestley himself;—his province was only to record the fact. The brevity with which the

events are related by the evangelist, prevents us from judging of the expediency or in expediency of that journey. Were I disposed to indulge in conjecture, I could assign reasons why Egypt might have been more suitable than "Tyre, or some part of Syria bordering upon Galilee;" but I am satisfied with the infallibility of the directions received by Joseph, for the safety of the child Jesus.

Dr. Priestley admits that the two narratives may be reconciled with each other: his principal objection is, that "capital circumstances" are omitted by each evangelist. This objection would equally apply to St. John's relation of the restoration of the sight of the man born blind, and of the restoration of Lazarus to life, after he had been some days buried; which miracles are omitted by the other three evangelists.

From this review of Paine's animadversions on the evangelical accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, and of Dr. Priestley's animadversions on the evangelical accounts of the miraculous conception, the reader cannot fail to perceive the remarkable coincidence which there is between their arguments, when directed against the present canon and text of the New Testament. And as the Unitarian will not admit the validity of the arguments urged by the Deist against the scriptural evidence for the resurrection of Christ, founded upon the omissions by one evangelist

of what is recorded by another; he must excuse me, if I cannot admit of the validity of the same arguments when urged by an Unitarian against another portion of Scripture.

It is far from my design to make an insidious comparison between the Unitarian and the Deist. However deficient the former may be in his belief of the grand and peculiar truths of the gospel, he believes Jesus to be the Messiah predicted by the prophets; whereas the Deist rejects all divine revelation:—this is the marked line of distinction between them. The object of the foregoing comparison between their arguments is, to shew to the Unitarian the real complexion of his objections to those portions of Scripture, the authenticity of which is defended in the following Work. Whether this comparison have the desired effect, or not, the unprejudiced reader will be put upon his guard against the attack of the Unitarian, upon the authenticity of those Scriptures which he professes to venerate and esteem. I do not accuse the Unitarian of making an insincere profession, or of intending, by such profession, to lay a trap for his reader; but it must be seen, from the complexion of his objections, that if they are admitted at all, we cannot consistently stop short of the extent to which they are carried by the Deist, who, by applying them to the whole of the New Testament, is, in this particular at least, more consistent than the Unitarian.

No ancient writings have been watched over with so sacred and sedulous a care, as the books of the Old and New Testament: to this circumstance, under Divine Providence, may be attributed the little injury they have sustained through transcription, or through wilful and fraudulent corruption of the text, during the many ages that have elapsed since they were written. These writings the Author was taught, from his infancy, to consider as the sacred depositories of divine truth; as containing the will of God revealed to mankind through his servants and prophets, in different ages of the world. As such he implicitly received them till some Unitarian publications fell in his way, which were, from their sceptical tendency, calculated to disturb this belief:—this induced investigation, and he was soon convinced that the Sacred Records will pass through the severest scrutiny, the most fiery ordeal, uninjured, unimpaired in their value; and that an investigation into their authenticity, fully and not partially made, would convert the original implicit faith into a confirmed rational conviction of their inestimable value; and that every attempt to depreciate their authenticity and divine authority, whether partial, or more general, must recoil with discomfiture and disgrace upon the heads of those who dare to contest their claims, and be as vain and hopeless as a struggle with Omnipotence itself.

The results of this investigation, so far as it

extends to the Unitarian Improved Version, will be found in the following Work, which is designed for the Christian reader, who may be placed in a similar situation with the Author, through a perusal of Unitarian productions, but without the same facilities of correcting the erroneous impressions which such productions are calculated to make upon the mind.

A trite observation, which has been applied to modern Deistical works, is equally applicable to those of the modern Unitarians—that they contain no argument of importance against the present canon and text of the Scriptures, which has not already received a full and complete refutation;—consequently, the arguments and evidence in the following Work, cannot be expected to contain much that is original: but as it compresses into one point of view, arguments and evidence which are scattered in various works, a considerable portion of it may be new to many readers; and those, for whom it is principally designed, will meet with some arguments, it is hoped, which may remove doubts impressed on their minds by reading Unitarian attacks upon the Scriptures.

The plan adopted in the following Work is, to give,—1st, The evidence in favour of the genuineness and authenticity of the portions of Scripture in dispute;—2d, The various arguments adduced against their genuineness and authenticity by the Unitarian; and then to examine the validity of those arguments.

This investigation of objections occupies, of course, by far the greater part of the Work. If any should think that the intrinsic merit of the objections did not deserve such a minute confutation, I agree with them; but it is not the intrinsic merit of the works that have been written against the Scriptures, but their influence upon the minds of men, which has induced the Christian to step forward to oppose them.

There is a plausibility in the remarks of the Editors of the Improved Version, and an appearance of critical and theological research in their notes, which have imposed even upon persons of intelligence and learning, and which could not be removed, but by an exposure of the disingenuousness of their remarks, of the superficial nature of their researches, and of the unfairness of their reference to those authorities by which they endeavour to support their rejection of the portions of Scripture in dispute. This could not be done by opposing *assertion to assertion*, nor by a mere denial of the accuracy of their references. Their assertions must be *proved* to be unfounded, and the authorities to which they refer, *proved* not to speak the language they attribute to them.

The extended circulation which has been given to this Unitarian Version, prevents any apology for such an exposure of criticisms, which, by undermining the evidence upon which the Scriptures are received as authentic and inspired writings, strike at the very foundation of Christianity.



Having given a brief sketch of the design and plan of this Work, I shall conclude this introductory chapter with some observations of the late excellent Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, elicited by the narrative contained in the first two chapters of Matthew:—"It is also, in the last place, worthy of remark, that every thing is here related with the greatest plainness, brevity, and simplicity, without any of that ostentation and parade which we so often meet with in other authors. Thus, for instance, a heathen writer would have put a long and eloquent speech into the mouth of the wise men, and would have provided the parents of the infant with a suitable answer. He would have painted the massacre of the infants in the most dreadful colours, and would have drawn a most affecting picture of the distress and agony of the afflicted parents. But the evangelists have not enlarged on these or any other similar topics. They have contented themselves with telling their story concisely and coldly, with a bare simple recital of facts, without attempting to work upon the passions, or excite the admiration of their readers.

"In fact, it appears from this and a variety of other instances of the same nature, that neither fame, nor reputation, nor any other worldly advantage, had the least influence upon their hearts. Their sole object was, the advancement of truth, of morality, of religion, of the eternal welfare and salvation of mankind. For these great objects they

wrote, for these they lived, for these they suffered, and for these they died; on these their thoughts were entirely and immoveably fixed, and therefore their narratives justly claim the most implicit belief in every thing that relates to their great, and important, and interesting subjects.”<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Porteus's Lectures on Matthew, Vol. I. pp. 47, 48.

## CHAP. II.

*The external Evidence in favour of the Narratives in the first two Chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke—from the Manuscripts and Versions—from the Apostolical Fathers—from the Ancient Fathers—The internal Evidence in favour of these Narratives—from the Coincidence and substantial Agreement between them—from their Piety and unaffected Simplicity—from their Agreement with the Histories of the Times, and with the Prophecies of the Old Testament.*

“IN examining the question,” says Dr. Herbert Marsh, “whether a passage of the Greek Testament be genuine or not, the first question to be asked is, What is the evidence of the Greek MSS., of the ancient versions, and of the ancient fathers<sup>1</sup>?” I shall commence my inquiry into the genuineness and authenticity of the first two chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, with an answer to that which this eminent critic calls, and very justly calls, the first question; an answer which will embrace the external evidence relative to the chapters under consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Marsh's Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament, Vol. III. Part II. p. 138.

"Now there have been," observes Dr. Marsh, not "less than three hundred and fifty-five Greek manuscripts of the Gospels collated, every one of which contains the two first chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel, with exception to the single Codex Ebnerianus. But even this manuscript contains the second chapter; and the more ancient manuscript contained probably the whole of the first<sup>2</sup>." The Codex Ebnerianus begins at the 18th verse of the first chapter, and consequently affords all the evidence wanted in the present inquiry.

In 1801, Dr. Barrett, of Trinity College, Dublin, published a *fac simile* of a *Codex Rescriptus*, containing part of St. Matthew's Gospel. It begins with a part of the genealogy of our Lord, Mat. i. 17, and ends with chap. xxvi. 71, with several chasms between. Dr. Barrett thinks this manuscript may be compared with the most ancient, in—1st, the division of the text;—2d, the orthography;—3d, the mode of pointing;—and, 4th, the abbreviations. This ancient and valuable fragment is therefore to be added to the MSS. formerly collated, as a testimony of the most respectable kind in favour of the genuineness of the first two chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel.

All the ancient versions contain these chapters, some of which bear marks of high antiquity.

---

<sup>2</sup> Marsh's Michaelis, Vol. III. Part II. p. 138.

The old Syriac is supposed to be nearly, if not quite, coeval with the apostolic age. Equally conclusive is the evidence of the MSS. and versions in favour of the genuineness of the first two chapters of the Gospel of St. Luke.

We shall next examine whether this evidence is contravened or confirmed by the testimony of the fathers of the primitive church.

There are epistles extant ascribed to Barnabas, the fellow-traveller of the Apostle Paul, Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp; and there is also a book, entitled "*The Shepherd*," by Hermes, supposed to be the same who is mentioned Rom. xvi. 14, who, being all contemporary with the apostles, are called the Apostolical Fathers. None of these, with the exception of the Epistles of Ignatius, have quotations from the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke; but when their subject leads them to quote those Gospels, the quotations agree with our present Greek text.

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, is supposed to have succeeded Euodius in that see, about the year of our Lord 70, and to have suffered martyrdom at Rome about the year 107. He was condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts of Rome, for the entertainment of the people. In his journey from Antioch to Rome he addressed epistles to several churches.

Of these epistles there are two editions; the larger epistles, which are acknowledged to be

interpolated; the smaller, which are generally admitted to be genuine, from their agreement with the descriptions which Polycarp and Eusebius have given of the epistles written by Ignatius, and with the quotations made by the most ancient Christian writers from Ignatius.

Some learned men have expressed doubts whether even this more correct edition has descended to us entirely free from alterations. Perhaps it has not: but as the foundation for these doubts is only presumptive, and their apparent importance or non-importance much depend on the preconceived opinions of the critic or theologian, they should not be entertained with respect to any passage, unless they are supported by strong internal evidence. As no such evidence can be adduced against the passages which I am about to cite, I shall, without hesitation, give them as proceeding from the pen of Ignatius.

In his Epistle to the Church of Smyrna, Ignatius says that he has observed they are settled in the faith, “being fully persuaded of those things which relate unto our Lord; who truly was of the race of David according to the flesh, but the Son of God according to the will and power of God: truly born of the virgin, and baptized of John; that *so all righteousness might be fulfilled by him*. He was also truly crucified by Pontius Pilate.—And he suffered truly, as he also truly

raised up himself: and not as some unbelievers say, that he only seemed to suffer.”<sup>3</sup>

In his Epistle to the Trallians, Ignatius cautions them to turn a deaf ear to those, who “speak contrary to Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David, of the Virgin Mary: who was truly born, and did eat and drink; was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and dead,—who was also truly raised from the dead by his Father.—But if, as some—pretend, that he only seemed to suffer, why then am I bound? why do I desire to fight with beasts? Therefore do I die in vain; therefore I will not speak falsely against the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

Again: in the Epistle to the Ephesians, Ignatius says, that Christ was “conceived in the womb of Mary, of the seed of David, by the Holy Ghost.” And a little after, in §. 19, he says, our Saviour was manifested to the world by a star, which “shone in heaven beyond all the other stars.”<sup>5</sup>

In the foregoing extracts from the Epistles to the Churches of Smyrna and Tralles, Ignatius combats one of the earliest corruptions of the Christian doctrine. It is evidently no part of his intention to vindicate the accounts of the miraculous conception against specific objections; his intention is simply to assert the reality of Christ’s birth, sufferings, death, and resurrection, in opposition

---

<sup>3</sup> Wake’s Epistles of the Apostolic Fathers, 4th Edit. p. 114.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 72.

to the Docetæ, who taught that Christ was a man in *appearance* only, and that he only *appeared* to suffer and die. Thus these passages contain internal marks of their genuineness. Something more conclusive than vague surmises must be opposed to the evidence which they furnish, in favour of the fact of the miraculous conception.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Belsham, in his Reply to Mr. B. Carpenter, very summarily disposes of the testimony of Ignatius. "As to Ignatius," says he, "when my friend has proved the genuineness of his epistles, and has separated the sound from the interpolated passages, I will then listen to his evidence." This is an easy way to evade the testimony of an ancient writer. It will require more cogent objections than any that have yet been preferred, to impugn the evidence for the genuineness of these epistles; I mean the smaller edition of them. If there be some expressions in this edition that look rather suspicious, as being interpolated by a more modern hand, the passages above quoted contain nothing of that description. The *undisputed antiquity* of these epistles makes them good evidence on an occasion like the present. Let Mr. Belsham oppose it by evidence more ancient and more authentic. This cannot be said of his evidence from Marcion and the Ebionites, from Cerinthus and Carpocrates.

Mr. John Pope has taken no little pains, in his work on the Miraculous Conception, to disprove the genuineness of the smaller epistles of Ignatius. I shall not detain the reader with a formal exposure of the futility of his objections, but give one of them as a specimen, and give also a specimen of his candour. Mr. Pope says, p. 217,—"That Ignatius, if the epistles ascribed to him were really his, was not acquainted with the doctrine of the apostles, may be fairly inferred, from the numerous absurdities which these epistles contain." At the head of these absurdities Mr. Pope places Ignatius's "assertion of the proper Deity of Christ." This to an Unitarian may appear very absurd; but that it should be urged against the Trinitarian, as an objection to the epistles of Ignatius, can only be viewed by the latter as a notorious instance of the *petitio principii*, the besetting sin of Unitarianism. After quoting several passages from the smaller or genuine epistles of Ignatius, Mr. Pope adds, p. 259, "I can easily conceive these epistles to have been written by a



Here closes my evidence from the apostolical fathers. Of the citations of these fathers from the Gospel of Matthew, Mr. Jeremiah Jones says, "All the writers of that age [*i. e.* the apostolic], when they cite this Gospel, do cite it as it is in our present Greek copies. Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Barnabas, and Polycarp, do cite this Gospel in such a manner, as undeniably evidences not only that they made use of the same copies, but also the same with our present Greek ones. This I assert upon a strict examination of this matter on each of these authors."<sup>7</sup>

Lardner also makes a similar observation from the agreement between the quotations of the apostolical fathers, "and our Greek Gospel, not only in sense, but also in the very words."<sup>8</sup>

---

bishop, 'but not such a bishop as Ignatius:'" and at the foot of the page refers to *Jortin*. It may be said that the words put by Mr. Pope, between quotation marks, are Dr. Jortin's. Admitted. But in this consists the want of candour. A sentiment of Dr. Jortin, which he applies to a passage in §. ix. of the longer or interpolated epistle to the Trallians, not to be found in the smaller epistle, is applied by Mr. Pope to the whole of the smaller epistles. The words of Jortin are, "The author of this commandment, in all probability, was a bishop, but not such a bishop as Ignatius." (*Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. I. p. 62.) This is, as I have just observed, applied to a passage not in the smaller or genuine edition of the epistles of Ignatius. Pope applies it to this edition, and refers to Dr. Jortin as his authority. This reference may be through inadvertance. It may be; but if Mr. Pope had really designed to mislead his readers, he could not have better effected his purpose.

<sup>7</sup> Vindication of St. Matthew's Gospel, Jones's Canon, Vol. III. pp. 146, 147.

<sup>8</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. I. p. 248.

This evidence goes to show, that the decision of the question, whether Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew or in Greek, is not so important as some have appeared to consider it: since, if the Greek text be a translation, it must be coeval with the apostolic age, and probably done by an inspired writer, if not by Matthew himself. Of evidence nothing certain can now be produced, as the Greek copy is all that has descended down to us.

After the writers, called the apostolical fathers, Justin Martyr is the first who claims our attention; he is the author of several works. Those from which the following extracts are taken, are, 1st, his two Apologies for the Christians, addressed to the Emperors M. Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Verus, and to the Roman Senate;—2d, “A Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, in Two Parts.”

In his Apology, Justin quotes Isaiah’s prophecy of Christ, that he was to be born of a virgin; and to illustrate it, he adverts to the account given of the miraculous conception by the evangelists, and says, “At the same time an angel was sent to the same virgin, saying, ‘Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb by the Holy Ghost, and thou shalt bring forth a son, and he shall be called the Son of the Highest; and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins;’ as they have taught who have writ the history of all things,

concerning our Saviour Jesus Christ—and we believe them<sup>9</sup>.” This quotation appears to be recited from memory.—Compare Matt. i. 20, 21, with Luke i. 31, 32.

Describing to the emperors the nature of the Christian worship, Justin says, “The memoirs of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, are read according as the time allows; and when the reader has ended, the president makes a discourse, exhorting to an imitation of so excellent things.”<sup>10</sup>

In his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Justin says, “But Herod, when the Arabian wise men did not come back to him as he had desired them, but, according to a command given them, returned by another way into their own country; and when Joseph, together with Mary and the young child, were gone into Egypt, according to directions given to them also by a divine revelation, not knowing the child whom the wise men had come to worship, commanded all the children in Bethlehem, without exception, to be killed. This was prophesied of by Jeremiah, the Spirit of God saying by him thus, ‘A voice was heard in Ramia.’”<sup>11</sup>

Again: “And the Virgin Mary having been filled with faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel brought her good tidings, that the Spirit of the Lord should come upon her, and the power of the

---

<sup>9</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. I. p. 266.    <sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 272.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Part I. Vol. II. p. 761.

Highest overshadow her, and therefore, that holy thing born of her should be the Son of God, answered, ' Be it unto me according to thy word.'"<sup>12</sup> This is taken from Luke i. 35—38.

Duly to appreciate the evidence of Justin Martyr, it is proper, first, to consider the period in which he wrote; and, secondly, his character. According to Dr. Cave, his *Apology*, addressed to Antoninus Pius, was presented in the year 140;—Pagi and Basnage say in the year 139, who also place the *Dialogue with Trypho* in the year 140. Now Polycarp, who was the disciple of the apostle John, suffered martyrdom, according to Du Pin and Tillemont, in the year 167; according to Basnage, in the year 169. Bishop Pearson supposes that Polycarp suffered in the year 148. Whichever of these dates we adopt as the most probable, it places the martyrdom of ~~Ignatius~~ <sup>Ignatius</sup> eight years, at least, subsequent to the presentation of Justin's first *Apology* to Titus Antoninus Pius.

We have here an *Apology* for the Christians, addressed to the Emperor, Senate, and People of Rome, within forty years after the death of the apostle John, when Polycarp, the disciple of that apostle, was living; in which it is publicly declared, as a circumstance well known, and therefore not with a view to give information of the fact, but to justify the evangelical narratives, how those who

---

<sup>12</sup> Lardner's *Cred.* Part II. Vol. I. pp. 267, 268.

had written the history of Christ had expressed themselves on the subject of the virginity of Mary, and of her miraculous conception of Christ by the Holy Spirit, without any carnal concurrence, to contrast it with the licentious amours of the heathen deities, as given by their poets.

Justin further remarks, that these writers were believed by the Christians, and that their memoirs or gospels were read as a part of divine worship, in the public assemblies of the Christians. Not to say a word of his *acknowledged integrity*, would Justin, if not well assured of the truth of his assertions, have hazarded the certain detection of a design to impose upon the Emperor and Senate of Rome, which would have followed from inquiry into the truth of his allegations? But the character of Justin places him beyond the suspicion of having employed an artifice so base and disingenuous, to elevate the person and character of his Lord and Master.

Justin was brought up in polytheism, the religion of his fathers: in his pursuit after wisdom, he did not implicitly attach himself to the dogmas of any one master, but examined into the merits of the different philosophical systems which then prevailed in the heathen world, without finding among them the object of his pursuit. At length, in one of his solitary and contemplative walks, he met with a venerable old man, upon whose recommendation he studied the Scriptures, and the result was, his

conversion to Christianity; for the sake of which, he renounced, as dross, all the philosophy of the heathen schools; cheerfully submitted to the ignominy attending a public profession of the Christian name; thought his life not dear, when put in competition with his faith in Christ; and his consequent sufferings and martyrdom are pointed out by the adjunct of martyr to his name since his death.

I have dwelt on the character of Justin, in order to evince that his testimony to the point before us is unexceptionable; since Mr. Belsham, speaking of his testimony on this point, says,—“Justin Martyr, honest, credulous Justin Martyr, believed the tale, but he does not pretend that he learned it from the apostle Matthew; he never asserts that it was believed by the Jewish Christians; he plainly insinuates that most, if not all of them, discredited the account, and that the Jews in general treated it as a foolish story.”<sup>13</sup>

Justin does not, in the extracts I have given from him, advance any *private speculative* opinion of his own; he does not give his sanction to a tale founded on rumour or common report, as might be supposed from the above writer's attempt to impeach his credit:—no; he is informing the Emperor and Senate of Rome, of facts recorded in books, received by the Christians as authentic, and read by

---

<sup>13</sup> Monthly Repository, Belsham's Reply to Carpenter, Vol. III. p. 362.

them in their religious assemblies; circumstances of which he was eye and ear witness.

The concession made by Mr. Belsham, to Justin's honesty, is therefore sufficient for us to demand of him full credit to the testimony of Justin, as that of an honest man. Justin asserts, *without any reservation*, that the Christian church received the narratives of the miraculous conception as authentic, and read in their churches, as a part of their divine service, the memoirs of the apostles which contained them.

But, says Mr. Belsham, the testimony of Justin "may be justly doubted; for, in fact, Justin never mentions any one of the evangelists, and only quotes from the memoirs of the apostles<sup>14</sup>." Mr. Belsham ought to have known that Justin's testimony is not involved in the uncertainty insinuated by him; for we cannot suppose him unacquainted with the following passages in Justin:—

"For the apostles," says he, "in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered it, that Jesus commanded them to take bread, and gave thanks."<sup>15</sup>

"For in the commentaries, which, as I have said, were composed by the apostles and their followers [or companions], it is written: That his

<sup>14</sup> Letters on Arianism, by T. Belsham, p. 68.

<sup>15</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. I. p. 270.

sweat fell like drops of blood, as he prayed, saying, If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." <sup>16</sup>

Again: "And it is written in the Gospel, that he said: All things are delivered to me of the Father. And no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, neither the Son, save the Father, and they to whom the Father will reveal him." <sup>17</sup>

Not to insist upon *memoirs* being an appropriate name for such narratives as our Gospels, Justin says that these memoirs were called Gospels; that they were written by the apostles and their followers, or companions. A more correct description of the authors of our Gospels could not well be given. Matthew and John were apostles, Mark and Luke were the companions of Peter and Paul, and the citations in Justin correspond with the Gospels written by them. Justin's citations are so evidently from Matthew's Gospel, and from copies with which our present Greek ones agree, that the observation which Mr. Jones makes respecting Ignatius, Barnabas, &c. already quoted (p. 38), he also applies to Justin.

The credibility of the testimony of Justin is yet more rudely assailed by Mr. Pope, in his "Observations on the Miraculous Conception;" but, as though he had not sufficient confidence in the validity of his

---

<sup>16</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. I. p. 271.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 267.



arguments, he endeavours to strengthen his conclusions by the authority of the name of Dr. Jortin, in a manner as disingenuous as it is common with the Unitarian. I shall therefore quote Dr. Jortin's character of Justin, which, whilst it enables the reader to form a just estimate of the testimony of the latter, will also guard him against implicit reliance on Unitarian reference to authorities.

Dr. Jortin makes the following observations on the testimony given by Justin Martyr in favour of the books of the New Testament:—  
 “Justin Martyr mentions the Gospels as universally received and read in the congregations in his time. He must have conversed with Christians who were old men, and from them have learned that the Gospels were extant when they were young. Οἱ Ἀπόστολοι (says he) ἐν τοῖς γενομένοις ὑπ’ αὐτῶν ἀπομνημονεύμασιν, ἃ καλεῖται Εὐαγγέλια, οὕτως παρέδωκαν.—And again, Τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν Ἀποστόλων ἀναγνώσκεται. Apol. I. And his citations from the four Gospels, from the Epistles of St. Paul, and from the Revelation, shew to a demonstration, that he had them as we now have them in the main.”<sup>18</sup>

Afterwards, repelling the charge made against Justin, of having forged the Sibylline Oracles, Dr. Jortin says:—“The supposition which some have made, that Justin Martyr was guilty of forging

---

<sup>18</sup> Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I. p. 54.

the Sibylline Oracles, is groundless and perverse. Justin has written his own character in every page of his works, and shews himself pious, warm, sprightly, fearless, open, hasty, honest, inquisitive, sincere, and as void of dissimulation and hypocrisy as a child.”<sup>19</sup>

The first of these extracts from Dr. Jortin, proves that he considered Justin a sufficient guide to assist our researches after the genuineness of our present canon of the New Testament; yet, Dr. Jortin is referred to by Mr. Pope, to support his argument to the contrary. I have not by me the edition of Jortin’s Remarks, referred to by Mr. Pope, which was probably that of 1767 and 1773, in four volumes; therefore, when he refers to Dr. Jortin, without quoting him, it is difficult to determine on the passage to which he refers. The edition before me is that of 1805, in three volumes. I will give an extract or two from that part of the work, and probably the same passages to which Mr. Pope refers.

“About A. D. 150,” says Dr. Jortin, “flourished Justin, the first christian author after those who are called apostolical; a virtuous, pious, honest man, and incapable of wilfully deceiving; but a hasty writer, and of a warm and credulous temper.—He was highly and justly esteemed by the ancient Christians. He wanted neither learning

---

<sup>19</sup> Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I. p. 204.

nor vivacity, nor an unartificial eloquence. The love of truth was his predominant passion, to which he sacrificed all worldly considerations, and for which he laid down his life with great resolution; and therefore, whosoever loves truth, should love him and his memory. ‘Galen,’ says our amiable writer John Hales, ‘Galen, that great physician, speaks thus of himself: *I know not how, even from my youth up, in a wonderful manner, whether by divine inspiration, or by fury and possession, or however you may please to stile it, I have much contemned the opinion of the many; but truth and knowledge I have above measure affected, verily persuading myself that a fairer, a more divine fortune could never befall a man.* Some little claim I may justly lay to the words of this excellent person; for the pursuit of truth hath been my only care, ever since I understood the meaning of the word. For this I have forsaken all hopes, all friends, all desires, which might bias me, and hinder me from driving right at what I aimed;—for this I have spent my money, my means, my youth, my age, and all that I have. If, with all this cost and pains, my purchase is but error, I may safely say, ‘To err hath cost me more, than it has many to find the truth; and truth shall give me this testimony at last, that if I have missed her, it is not my fault, but my misfortune.’ Justin would not perhaps have expressed himself upon this subject with the same

strength and elegance, but he had the same heart, and the same turn of mind.”<sup>20</sup>

After giving some extracts from Justin’s Apology and Dialogue with Trypho, as illustrative of his character, Dr. Jortin observes:—“ I shall not undertake the vindication of Justin concerning the celebrated statue erected to Simon Magus: I am inclined to think that he was mistaken, and that the proud Romans would never have deified a Samaritan knave, and a strolling magician.—In behalf of Justin it might be said, that as worthless men as Simon had religious respect paid to them about the time when Justin wrote, or not long after. Alexander (the impostor perhaps, and false prophet), and Peregrinus, called Proteus, another knave,—and one Neryllinus, an obscure mortal, had statues erected to them at Troas and Parium, in the time of Marcus Aurelius, and when Neryllinus was living; to which statues divine honours were paid, and which were said to give oracles and to work miracles: So cheap was deification in those days.—Epiphanes, the son of the heretic Carpocrates, and a heretic as well as his father, was deified about the middle of the second century, or the time when Justin wrote.—Now Simon, it may be said, might have acquired such honours as easily as Epiphanes, who, though he was ingenious, was but a boy.”

---

<sup>20</sup> Jortin’s Remarks, Vol. I. pp. 334, 335.

“ If any one thinks that these examples tend to support Justin, they are at his service. Dr. Thirlby, when I once mentioned them to him, thought them observable, and fit to be produced on this subject.”

*“ Without detracting from the merits of this worthy man, we ought to acknowledge, what truth and plain matter of fact extort from us, that he, and the rest of the fathers, are often poor and insufficient guides in things of judgment and criticism, and in the interpretation of the Scriptures; and sometimes in points of morality also, and of doctrine.—The men themselves usually deserve much respect, and their writings are highly useful on several accounts; but it is better to defer too little than too much to their decisions, and to the authority of antiquity, that handmaid to Scripture as she is called.”*<sup>21</sup>

I cordially agree with Dr. Jortin, that it is better to defer too little than too much to the decisions of the fathers on points of doctrine, and the interpretation of Scripture. In the last paragraph which is quoted by Mr. Pope, the italic character distinguishes what is omitted by him. I have not broken in upon my extracts from Dr. Jortin by remarks, but reserved my strictures on Mr. Pope's perversion of Dr. Jortin, till the reader should have the whole of Jortin's character

---

<sup>21</sup> Jortin's Remarks, Vol. I. pp. 337—339.

of Justin before him. Of this character Mr. Pope only trusts his reader with that part which relates to Justin's mistake with respect to the statue erected to Simon Magus, and with the last paragraph in a mutilated state.

The foregoing character of Justin establishes two points of the utmost importance in our present inquiry; — 1st, That his sincerity and love of truth were a security against a misrepresentation of facts that came within his personal knowledge; — 2d, That he would be the last man either to fabricate himself, or to impose upon the world, forged accounts of Christ, for the purpose of exalting his character. Justin must have known what books were received by the Christians of his time as of divine authority, as really written by the apostles, and their companions Mark and Luke. Nothing therefore short of an impeachment of his veracity can depreciate his testimony for the genuineness of the books of the New Testament. Consequently, his testimony has been appealed to on this point by writers, who have been far from deferring too much to the authority of the fathers.

Whatever defects may have fallen to the lot of the primitive Christian fathers, their care and solicitude to preserve pure and uncorrupt the Sacred Records, and to reject every attempt to impose on them forged writings as the productions of the apostles, are entitled to our warmest praise. They have indeed (such at times is the irresistible

force of truth) extorted from their greatest detractors concessions in their favour.<sup>22</sup>

If the primitive fathers were not infallible guides in the opinions they advanced, so neither are their detractors; and, in many instances, the former may be safer guides to follow than the latter.

Mr. Pope's zeal and prejudice have made him confound with each other considerations entirely distinct and unconnected. This Dr. Jortin's candour and good sense have prevented him from doing. Thus the latter justly appeals, without any reserve, to the testimony of Justin in favour of the present canon of the New Testament: but he does not hence infer that Justin must be always correct, when he speaks from the reports of others, or that he is an infallible guide in the opinions which he advances. The partial and unfair manner in which Mr. Pope has represented the sentiments of Dr. Jortin, affords a proof, how apt we are to fall into the very error which we are the first to complain of in others;—Mr. Pope himself having, in no very gentle terms, charged Mr. Nisbett and Dr. Middleton with unfair quotation. Had Mr. Pope's pen been guided by an impartial love of truth, he would not have suppressed what Dr. Jortin has said in favour of Justin; neither would he have omitted the following clause—"The men themselves usually deserve

---

<sup>22</sup> See Introduction to the Improved Version, §. 11. p. viii.

much respect, and their writings are highly useful on several accounts"—inserting only what immediately follows it. By such management a writer may be made to say any thing.

As a proof that Justin is an incompetent witness in the present inquiry, Mr. Pope adduces his assertion, "that prophetic gifts existed among Christians, even in his days; that they exorcised all demons and evil spirits, and held them in subjection<sup>23</sup>." This may, to Mr. Pope, and to his Unitarian coadjutors, be a decisive proof of Justin's credulity and want of judgment. But what says the learned and candid Jortin? After having stated the probability, that the disciples of the apostles "received extraordinary gifts"—"that they were also enabled, when they went about preaching the Gospel, to confirm it by signs and wonders, at some times, and on some occasions," especially among the more remote Gentiles,—he proceeds, "This brings the probability of miracles down to the beginning of the second century, in the middle of which Justin Martyr says, There are prophetic gifts among us, *EVEN UNTIL NOW*, *παρὰ γὰρ ἡμῶν καὶ μέχρι νῦν προφητικὰ χαρίσματα ἔστιν* and amongst these gifts, he reckons up miraculous powers, as *healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, &c.* (pp. 315, 330.) His words imply an opinion, that such gifts were not only exercised in his time,

---

<sup>23</sup> Pope on the Miraculous Conception, p. 272.



but had been *continued down* to his time; and he may be justly supposed to speak the sense of his contemporary Christians; and that is all that I cite him for. It seems probable, that if we had a full and authentic history of the propagation of the Gospel, from the time of the apostles, to the middle of the second century, composed by eye-witnesses, and by the preachers of Christianity, we should find miracles wrought for the conversion of Pagans."<sup>24</sup>

What Justin says of miraculous gifts in his own time, may be from the report of others, and not from what he had seen himself; yet Dr. Jortin, though he does not think that Justin's opinion is of itself sufficient to establish a fact of so dubious a nature, is yet so far from considering Justin's remark on miracles to be a proof of his credulity and want of judgment, that, to a certain extent, he appeals to it as evidence in favour of their existence in the time of Justin. This difference of opinion between Dr. Jortin and Mr. Pope, shews that the decision of the question, whether an opinion expressed by a primitive father is to be considered as indicative of want of judgment, or otherwise, will much depend on the preconceived opinion of his readers; consequently, such decision will be very insufficient ground for rejecting the evidence of such a father to matters of facts that

---

<sup>24</sup> Jortin's Remarks, Vol. I. pp. 289, 290.

came within his cognizance; and such must be considered his evidence for the reception, by himself and his fellow-christians, of any books of the New Testament, as genuine, and of divine authority. I shall now leave the honest Justin, the learned Jortin, and their Unitarian opponent, Mr. Pope, at the bar of candour and common sense.

A few observations of Lardner, when he sums up the evidence of Justin, shall conclude my remarks on his testimony:

“He [Justin] speaks of memoirs or records writ by the apostles, or their companions, plainly meaning the apostles and evangelists, Matthew and John; and by companions or disciples of the apostles, Mark and Luke. These Gospels were read and expounded in the solemn assemblies of the Christians, as the books of the Old Testament were.—He must have been well assured of the truth of what he says.—If it had not been the general practice, or had obtained in some few places only, he must have spoken more cautiously, and made use of some limitations and exceptions. For if there were Christian churches, in which the memoirs he speaks of were not read, upon inquiry made by the Emperor, or his order, he had run the hazard of being convicted of a design to impose upon all the majesty of the Roman Empire; and that, not in an affair incidentally mentioned, but in the conduct and worship of his own people, concerning whom he professeth to give the justest information. The

general reading of the Gospels, as a part of divine worship, at that time, about the year 140, is not only a proof that they were well known, and allowed to be genuine, but also that they were in the highest esteem. These Gospels were not concealed. Justin appeals to them in the most public manner, and they were open to all the world, read by Jews and others."<sup>25</sup>

Contemporary with Justin Martyr was Hegesippus, a Hebrew Christian. He wrote a history of the church to his own time, in five books: the work is lost, but some fragments are preserved by Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History. Hegesippus is supposed to have composed his history in the reign of Marcus Aurelius.

The following extract relates to Domitian's inquiry after the descendants of David:—"At that time there were yet remaining of the kindred of Christ, the grandsons of Jude, who was called his brother according to the flesh. These some accused as being of the race of David; and Evocatus brought them before Domitianus Cæsar; for he too was afraid of the coming of the Christ, as well as Herod."

"This passage," says Lardner, "deserves to be remarked: it contains a reference to the history in the second chapter of St. Matthew, and shews plainly, that this part of St. Matthew's Gospel was

---

<sup>25</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. I. p. 286—288.

owned by this Hebrew Christian.—So that he used our Greek Gospel; or, if he used only the Hebrew edition of St. Matthew's Gospel, this history must have been in it in his time."<sup>26</sup>

These remarks of Lardner are so judicious, and his conclusions so well supported by his premises, that I need only make one observation upon the testimony of Hegesippus, which is this, that it affords a distinct proof, that this part of Matthew's Gospel was received by the Jewish as well as Gentile converts to the Christian faith, at the time when this Hebrew Christian wrote."<sup>27</sup>

In the seventeenth year of Marcus Aurelius, A. D. 177, the churches of Lyons and Vienna sent an epistle to the churches of Asia and Phrygia, giving an account of the sufferings of some of their martyrs, during a persecution that had raged at Lyons and the adjacent country. Of one of their martyrs, named Vettius Epagathus, they say, "that, though young, he equalled the character of old Zacharias, for he walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."<sup>28</sup>

Here we have the public testimony of the churches of Lyons and Vienna, in favour of the

<sup>26</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. I. p. 318, 319.

<sup>27</sup> This remark is not intended to apply to those who were separated from the church. A theologian must be reduced to distress, who opposes the varied notions of these to the professed belief of the main body of Christians, at this early period of Christianity.

<sup>28</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. I. p. 336; and Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Book V. c. 1.

history contained in the first chapter of St. Luke's Gospel; and the incidental manner in which it is adverted to, proves that it relates to a narrative well known, and generally received as authentic.

About this period flourished Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, and Bishop of Lyons, which situation he probably filled when the letter above adverted to was written, as he succeeded Pothinus, who suffered martyrdom in the persecution mentioned therein. He was the author of several works, but his five books against heresies is the only work that is now remaining.

"But the Holy Spirit," says Irenæus, "foreseeing there would be deceivers, and guarding against their deceit, says by Matthew, Now the birth of Christ was in this wise."<sup>29</sup>

Again:—"But if any one rejects Luke, as if he did not know the truth, he will be convicted of throwing away the Gospel of which he professeth to be a disciple. For there are many, and those very necessary parts of the Gospel, which we know by his means; as, the birth of John, the history of Zacharias, the visit of the angel to Mary, and the descent of the angels to the shepherds, and the things said by them, and the testimony of Anna and Simeon to Christ," &c.<sup>30</sup>

The Gospels are also described by Irenæus, as of equal authority with the Scriptures of the Old

<sup>29</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. I. p. 385.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 357.

Testament. "Since all the Scriptures," says he, "both prophecies and Gospels, are open and clear, and may be heard of all."<sup>31</sup>

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus was born at Carthage, about A. D. 160. Of the Christian fathers, he is the most ancient Latin writer extant.

In his work against Marcion, Tertullian says, "Among the apostles, John and Matthew first teach us the faith. Among apostolical men, Luke and Mark refresh it, going upon the same principles, as concerning the one God the Creator, and his Christ, born of a virgin, the accomplishment of the law and the prophets."<sup>32</sup>

*John*

In his Treatise *On the Flesh of Christ* (*De Carne Christi*), is the following: "—— And especially Matthew, the most faithful historian of the Gospel, as being a companion of the Lord, for no other reason, than that we might be informed of the origin of Christ, according to the flesh, began in this manner. The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."<sup>33</sup>

The famous Origen, who wrote in the third century, in his answer to Celsus, says:—"Herod put to death all the little children in Bethlehem,

<sup>31</sup> Lardner's Cred. p. 383. See also Iren. contra Hæres. lib. ii. cap. 27. §. 2. lib. iii. cap. 14.

<sup>32</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. II. pp. 574, 575.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, pp. 584, 585.

and its borders, with a design to destroy the King of the Jews, who had been born there.”<sup>34</sup>

Here closes my evidence from the ancient fathers. If it be objected that the fathers do not, in their works, always reason conclusively, and that although they possessed “great integrity,” they displayed “but little judgment,” the answer is brief:—that this objection does not affect their evidence on the present question, which only requires the admission of their integrity; for then their testimony with respect to the books of the New Testament, received by the Christian church in their time, and with respect to the contents of those books, is not to be disputed. It is a circumstance to be kept continually in view in the present inquiry, that it does not relate to opinions, with respect to which the judgment of the writer might influence his report,—but to facts, to a faithful report of which the most common understanding is equal. When the writer reasons either upon these facts, or upon the opinions held by the primitive church, the reader may be at liberty either to approve or disapprove of the arguments which he adduces, without any impeachment of his veracity, though not perhaps of the infallibility of his judgment.

If the evidence of the most ancient manuscripts and versions—of the earliest writers in the Christian church—of the church itself, are not sufficient

---

<sup>34</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part I. Vol. II. p. 762.

to establish the fidelity of our present Greek copies of the New Testament, where will the objectors procure their more authentic evidence to establish the authenticity of those parts of the New Testament which they *do* receive?

Compare the narratives of Matthew and Luke with each other, and it will appear, from the circumstantial variety between them, (a variety which involves no contradiction), that the evangelists could not have written in concert; whereas, there is a coincidence in their description of the principal events, which nothing but their being true, though concise, relations of historical facts, can account for. Matthew says that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, but does not mention the residence of Joseph and Mary previous to that event. Luke says it was at Nazareth, and mentions the census or enrolment ordered by Augustus Cæsar as the cause of their journey to Bethlehem, and of the birth of Jesus at that place. Luke also relates the appearance of angels to some shepherds, and their glorious anthem at the birth of Christ; also his presentation at the temple, agreeably to the law of Moses. These transactions are not mentioned by Matthew, who, however, records circumstances not noticed by Luke; namely, the wise men's coming to worship Christ; the consequent massacre of the infants at Bethlehem by Herod; and Joseph's flight into Egypt with Jesus and his mother. In all this, though



the evangelists relate different incidents, there is no inconsistency between them,—they perfectly harmonize in the most important particulars recorded by each. They both state that Mary, a virgin espoused to Joseph, had conceived by the Holy Spirit, before the consummation of the proposed marriage; that Jesus was born at Bethlehem of Judea, but that he was brought up at Nazareth, a city of Galilee; and thence called Jesus of Nazareth.

Matthew's silence, as to the time when, or the place where, the wise men presented their offerings to Christ, has afforded commentators ample scope for conjecture. The opinion which appears to me most completely to make the two evangelists harmonize with each other, is that, which supposes, that after the presentation of Christ in the temple, and his return with his parents to Nazareth, the wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, where they were directed to Bethlehem; but instead of obeying this direction, they followed the star, which had before appeared to them in their own country, and now appeared again to them, to prevent their being misled, and "went before them," not to Bethlehem, but to Nazareth: there is nothing in Matthew's relation inconsistent with this supposition; the star, according to this evangelist, led them not to a stable or inn, but to a house.

If the distance of Nazareth from Jerusalem present any difficulty to this conjecture, the chronology

of events adopted by Dr. Lardner, and which I follow, admits of Mary's being in Judea, on a visit to her cousin Elizabeth, or elsewhere, when the wise men arrived in Judea: the brevity of the evangelical narratives is a sufficient answer to any objection from their silence.

Mr. Newcombe Cappe, an eminent Unitarian, seems to have been similarly impressed with the harmony between the two evangelists, and with the internal evidence of genuineness contained in their accounts. I will give his words;—the sentiments of such a writer, in favour of the introductory chapters of Matthew and Luke, being doubly valuable, because opposed to the prejudices of his party.

“ With respect to the two first chapters of Luke's Gospel in particular, I find in them no internal traces of forgery or fiction, but many of genuineness and truth. Here are no mistakes, here is nothing inconsistent with manners or with facts, nothing that accords not, as well as truth could accord, with all we know of what went before, and of what followed this narrative. Every thing that is ascribed to every character, whether word or deed, is perfectly natural and proper. The narratives of Matthew and Luke are both forged if either is; they agree perfectly together, and they reciprocally elucidate and support each other:—*e. g.* Luke's story of the annunciation explains and supports Matthew's narrative in his 18th verse; and his story of the angel's

see

address to Joseph, in the 20th, and the subject of Mary's joy in the 48th verse of Luke, is explained and illustrated by what we find of Joseph's state of mind concerning his purpose, and his change of purpose in the 19th and 20th verses of Matthew. Some things in the narratives are of such a nature, that they were likely to bring the whole into controversy: such as an ingenious forger would have avoided as improbable; such as would hardly have presented themselves to his imagination; or, if they had, such as he would have rejected, lest he should discredit his fiction. Of some it is not probable that they should be either intended or undertaken, nor was it within the compass of human power to bring about: *e. g.* The journey to Bethlehem with Mary, so far advanced in her pregnancy, was not a thing that Joseph could be supposed to chuse; and if it had been in his desire, that this character of the Messiah,—*that he should be born in that place*, or that he should be born at the time of the enrolment,—should be accomplished in his son, it was not in his power to secure either of these points; these events, the one an essential characteristic of the Messiah, the other useful and important in the discovery of his birth to the shepherds, appeared more like the real care of Providence, and its powerful disposal and control, than the fictitious invention and studied management of man. The story of Zacharias and Elizabeth, for the confirmation of

Mary's faith in the angel's prophecy, seems neither natural or easy to imagine for the purpose; and had it been a fiction, the scene would not have been laid in a place so public, and under the observation of so many people; the circumstances would not have been so numerous, so particular, and so extraordinary; nor would it have been remarked, that the transaction was noised abroad, and made deep impressions on the minds of the whole country. Again, as in these things there are hazards of detection which a forger would have not incurred; so also, in other instances, there is such wonderful propriety in numerous particulars, as would not have occurred to an impostor. For instance:—the angel's message to the shepherds, considered as intended to engage their attention and belief, is most admirably proper; it is conceived in terms, all of them alluding to ancient prophecies of the Messiah, every one of which has singular pertinence and energy; and the whole shews circumspection, comprehension, and attention of mind, which a forger would probably not have possessed: this, again, seems more like the care of Providence, than the invention of a forger."<sup>35</sup>

So far Newcombe Cappe: it may also be observed, that nothing could be more natural, than the suspicion entertained by Joseph, upon his discovery of the pregnancy of Mary, and his consequent

---

<sup>35</sup> Monthly Repository for 1813, pp. 188—190.

resolve, as related by Matthew—than Matthew's description of the means by which his distrust of his betrothed wife was removed.

Whether we consider the unaffected simplicity of the relation, the calmness with which Matthew records the murder of the infants at Bethlehem, (a peculiarity characteristic of the sacred writers,) without indulging in reflections on the cruelty of Herod, from which a common historian, on such an occasion, would scarcely have abstained,—the incidental coincidence in the casual description, given by the evangelists of the reigning powers of that period, with the accounts we read of them in profane histories,—or the spirit of piety which pervades the narrative of Luke; we may apply to these portions of the Gospels, what Rousseau said of the Gospels themselves,—that the supposed fabrication of them is more wonderful, more repugnant to our knowledge of the complexion of forgery, than the admission of them as authentic narratives.

“One argument,” says Archdeacon Paley, “which has been much relied upon (but not more than its just weight deserves), is the conformity of the facts occasionally mentioned or referred to in Scripture, with the state of things in those times, as represented by foreign and independent accounts; which conformity proves, that the writers of the New Testament possessed a species of local knowledge, which could only belong to an inhabitant of that country, and to one living in that age. This argument, if

well made out by examples, is very little short of proving the absolute genuineness of the writings. It carries them up to the age of the reputed authors,—to an age, in which it must have been difficult to impose upon the Christian public, forgeries in the names of those authors, and in which there is no evidence that any forgeries were attempted. It proves, at least, that the books, whoever were the authors of them, were composed by persons living in the time and country in which these things were transacted, and consequently capable, by their situation, of being well informed of the facts which they relate.”<sup>36</sup>

This “conformity of facts,” upon which Paley, not without reason, lays considerable stress, is perhaps as discoverable in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke, as in any other part of the New Testament. Herod, the son of Antipater, whom Matthew calls the *King*, and whom Luke calls the *King of Judea*, is properly so denominated, that title having been given to him by the Romans; whereas Matthew, in chap. xiv. 1, when speaking of the son of this Herod, who was Tetrarch of Galilee, distinguishes him by his proper title, of *Tetrarch*. So also does Luke, and the country over which he governed. See chap. iii. 1, ix. 7, xxiii. 6, 7. These passages evince the same “species of local knowledge,” the same accuracy in designating by

---

<sup>36</sup> Paley’s *Evidences of Christianity*, Vol. II. pp. 125, 126, Tenth Edition, 1804.

their proper titles the potentates in Palestine, as the introductory chapters,—consequently they afford presumptive evidence of having been written by the same writers. The jealousy excited in the breast of Herod, by the inquiry of the wise men, and his political artifice to get into his power the object of his jealousy, perfectly correspond with the character of Herod, as given by Josephus. As his subsequent massacre of the infants in Bethlehem and its vicinity, in consequence of his disappointment, may appear to a reader the most improbable circumstance of the narrative, I will give a summary view of some of the cruelties practised by Herod, which will shew that this tyrant was quite equal to the barbarous policy recorded of him by Matthew. He murdered every member of the Sanhedrim, in Hyrcanus's time, except Pollio and Sameas.<sup>37</sup> Aristobulus, brother of his wife Mariamne, was, at the age of eighteen years, murdered by his order, because the people at Jerusalem had shewn some affection for his person. He put to death Hyrcanus, grandfather of his wife Mariamne, when eighty years of age, only because he had a better title to the crown than himself, as being the only remaining person of the male line of the Asmoneans; though he was indebted to this very Hyrcanus for his life, when he was prosecuted by the Sanhedrim. The same fate attended his beloved wife, the beautiful and virtuous

---

<sup>37</sup> Jos. Antiq. Book XIV. c. 9, §. 4.

Mariamne, and the two sons he had by her, upon groundless jealousies and suspicions.

In his last illness, when he was past hopes of recovery, he summoned all the chief men of the Jewish nation to assemble at Jericho, which summons was enforced with the penalty of death. When these men were assembled at Jericho, he ordered them all to be shut up in the hippodrome, or circus; and sending for his sister Salome, and her husband Alexas, he said to them, "I shall die in a little time, so great are my pains;—but what principally troubles me is this, that I shall die without being lamented, and without such mourning as men usually expect at a king's death;" and, in order to afford him some alleviation of his great sorrows, and procure him the mourning he was so desirous to obtain, he requested them immediately, on his death, to place soldiers round the hippodrome, and give orders that those who were in custody should be shot with their darts; "with tears in his eyes, he intreated them, by the kindness they owed to him, and by the faith they owed to God, that they would not hinder him of this memorable mourning at his funeral. So they promised to obey his commands<sup>38</sup>." These commands, though never executed, serve to finish the portrait already given of Herod's character; and we may say, with Prideaux, that "the history of this, his wicked

---

<sup>38</sup> Jos. Antiq. Book XVII. c. 6, §. 5.



design, thoroughly shews that there can be nothing imagined so cruel, barbarous, and horrid, which this man was not capable of doing."

It is not probable that Matthew, who was a Jew, could be ignorant of these cruelties of Herod; yet he does not even advert to them, but only records what relates to Jesus. This is very unlike imposture or fiction, which is too conscious of the need of foreign aid, to give plausibility to its story, to neglect it when placed directly within its reach.

"But when Herod was dead," says Matthew, "behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel, for *they are dead which sought the young child's life.*"

From the use of the plural pronoun *they*, it may be concluded that Antipater, the eldest son of Herod, is meant, as being concerned with his father in the attempt against the life of Jesus: he died but five days before Herod, being put to death for having conspired against his father's life, instigated to it solely by an impatient desire to ascend the throne. This allusion to Antipater, without an elucidation of it by Matthew, confirms the preceding remarks; it evinces the same consciousness of integrity and faithfulness, the same inattention to obviating objections.

"When Joseph heard," says Matthew, "that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his

father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; notwithstanding being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee." Newcome translates this passage, *he withdrew into the parts of Galilee*; that is, by a private way, avoiding Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

From this passage in Matthew, it appears that Archelaus succeeded his father Herod in the government of that part of his kingdom which comprised Judea, but it is at the same time implied that his government did not extend to Galilee, and this corresponds with Josephus's account of the division of Herod's kingdom among his sons after his death. Archelaus had Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, with the title of Ethnarch; Herod Antipas was Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea; and Philip, of Batanea, Trachonitis, and the neighbouring country.<sup>39</sup>

Two reasons may be assigned for the fears of Joseph, when he heard that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod;—First, the character of Archelaus, which so nearly assimilated with that of his father Herod, that "in the tenth year of his government," says Josephus, "the chief of the Jews and Samaritans, not being able to endure his cruelty and tyranny, presented complaints against him to Cæsar.—Augustus having heard both sides, banished Archelaus to Vienne in Gaul,

---

<sup>39</sup> Jos. Antiq. Book XVII. c. 11, §. 4. Jewish War, Book II. c. 6, §. 3.

and confiscated his treasury.”<sup>40</sup>—Secondly, the capital of Judea, through which probably the public and usual road to Galilee lay, was the place where the alarm had been excited, by the report of the birth of the King of the Jews; but, having received encouragement and direction from God, Joseph returned to Galilee by a private route; and Galilee being situated remote from Jerusalem, and not under the jurisdiction of Archelaus, as it had been under that of Herod, upon his arrival there, he found himself in a place of security.

Matthew wrote near the date of the events recorded by him; he had been an eye witness to many of them, and was well assured of the truth of what he recorded. His coincidence with historians of the same period is therefore unlaboured, and only incidental, as his subject necessarily led to a notice of the ruling powers among the Jews.

Luke, in his Gospel (chap. ii. ver. 2), has also, in a casual manner, evinced his knowledge of an event mentioned by Josephus; but this will be adverted to in the answer to objections.

In the miraculous conception the Jewish prophecies meet with their fulfilment; more especially Gen. iii. 15, Isai. vii. 14, and Jerem. xxxi. 22. This branch of the evidence will be fully considered hereafter in my reply to objections.

---

<sup>40</sup> Jos. Antiq. Book XVII. c. 13, §. 2. See also Lardner's Cred. Part I. Book I. c. 1.

Such is the declaratory evidence for the authenticity of the introductory chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, presented by the manuscripts, the versions, the writings of the earliest Christian fathers; the unaffected simplicity of the narratives themselves, and their coincidence with the histories of the times, and with the Jewish prophecies.

I shall next proceed to examine the arguments by which the Unitarian endeavours to rebut the foregoing evidence.

## CHAP. III.

*Animadversions on the Attempts of the Unitarians to impeach the Writers of the Introductory Chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke — The Objection urged by the Editors of the Improved Version, that the First Two Chapters of St. Matthew were not in the Hebrew Gospel of the Nazarenes and Ebionites, examined—Nazarene, a name not attaching to the primitive Hebrew Christians—The Nazarenes and Ebionites not the same Sect—The Gospel used by the former the least corrupt—quoted by the early Christian Fathers—contained the First Two Chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel—The Ebionite Copy too corrupt to be any Evidence—Marcion's Evangelium adduced by the Editors of the Improved Version, as Evidence that the First Two Chapters of St. Luke's Gospel are an Interpolation—Marcion's Evangelium a Compilation of his own, to suit his erroneous Opinions—no Evidence towards ascertaining the Accuracy of the present Text of St. Luke's Gospel—its Authority overturned by Mr. Belsham himself.*

**B**EFORE I consider the objections advanced by the Unitarians against the authenticity of the narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which relate the miraculous conception and birth of Christ, I will advert to the motives they assign

to the authors of these narratives for composing them.

“There is a part of the Gospel of St. Luke,” says Mr. Evanson, “which we need not hesitate to pronounce none of his, but the daring fiction of some of the easy-working interpolators, as Origen calls them, of the beginning of the second century, from amongst the Pagan converts; who, to do honour, as they deemed it, to the Author of their newly-embraced religion, were willing that his birth should at least equal that of the Pagan heroes and demigods, Bacchus and Hercules, in its wonderful circumstances and high descent, and thereby laid the foundation of the succeeding orthodox deification of the man Jesus, which, in degree of blasphemous absurdity, exceeds even the gross fables of Pagan superstition, inasmuch as it makes him equal in godhead, power, and even in eternity of existence, with his celestial Sire, the Supreme Deity himself. What I mean is, the whole of the two first chapters which follow the short introductory preface to Theophilus, containing the narration of the birth of John the Baptist, and the history of the birth, infancy, and twelve first years of the life of our Lord Jesus.” The same writer, speaking of the first two chapters of the Gospel of St. Matthew, says:—“The sole purpose of these two first chapters is to teach that Jesus was not the son of Joseph, but, like Bacchus and Hercules amongst the Pagans, the

---

offspring of Mary, impregnated by the influence of the Supreme Deity of heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Thomas Belsham, in a sermon preached at Hackney, in 1794, says, “that the first fiction to exalt the Founder of this new religion to a rank equal, if not superior, to the greatest heroes and gods of the old superstition, was that of his miraculous conception and birth.”<sup>2</sup>

The Editors of *The New Testament in an Improved Version, &c.*, in their note in the first chapter of Matthew, say:—“The account of the miraculous conception of Jesus was probably the fiction of some early Gentile convert, who hoped, by elevating the dignity of the Founder, to abate the popular prejudice against the sect.” Among others, the reader is referred to Evanson’s *Dissonance*. In the note on the first chapter of Luke, they say:—“It [the miraculous conception] would lessen the odium attached to Christianity, from its Founder being a crucified Jew, and would elevate him to the dignity of the heroes and demi-gods of the heathen mythology.”

Mr. Wright, in an *Essay on the Miraculous Conception of Jesus Christ*, says:—“The notion of his not being produced in the same way as other men, seems to have been the first step

---

<sup>1</sup> Evanson’s *Dissonance of the Four generally received Evangelists*, Ed. 1798, pp. 32, 33, 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Dishonest Shame the Primary Cause of the Corruptions of the Christian Doctrine*, pp. 16, 17.

towards transforming the most humble and devout of the servants of God into a being more than human, and so of getting rid of the reproach of having a crucified man for their master."

"It is highly improbable," says this writer, "[that] the story of the miraculous conception should originate with the Jewish Christians: it most likely had its rise among the Gentiles. Among the latter it was nothing new to suppose [that] an immediate intercourse took place between the Deity and human females,—heathen mythology furnishes several instances."<sup>3</sup>

What can be said of the purity of the imagination, or of the clearness of the ideas of that man, who really thinks he discovers any affinity between the evangelical accounts of the conception and birth of Christ, and the heathen fabulous accounts of the licentious amours of their gods with women which gave birth to their heroes and demigods? He is certainly ill qualified justly to appreciate the difference between the most libidinous and the purest and most sacred of writings.

Confidently as the Unitarian writers assert what was the origin of the narratives in dispute, and the motives which influenced the writers; they have produced no proof, for the best of reasons—they had none to produce.—Antiquity is silent on the subject. Their assertions, however, prove

---

<sup>3</sup> Wright's Essay on the Miraculous Conception, pp. 32, 33.



that they consider the first two chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke so strongly to support the orthodox opinion of the divinity of Christ, as to have been the very origin of this doctrine among Christians.

The motive assigned for the invention of the history of the miraculous conception, does not evince, in my opinion, sufficient attention in those who advance it, to the state of religion and philosophy, when Christianity was first promulgated.

“The grand reproach of Christianity,” says Mr. Belsham, “was, that the founder of this new doctrine was a crucified Jew. This was the standing topic of derision and insult. The cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness<sup>4</sup>.” The words of the apostle here adverted to, are in 1 Cor. i. 22—24: “The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

As the offence spoken of by the apostle, is applied by him equally to the Jew as to the Greek or Gentile, it must be something applicable to both. It could not therefore be because our Saviour was a Jew, for such the Jews expected

---

<sup>4</sup> Dishonest Shame the Primary Source of the Corruptions of the Christian Doctrine, p. 14.

their Messiah to be; neither could it be because he died a martyr to the cause of religion and virtue; this to the Jew, whose prophets not unfrequently met with violent deaths, through a faithful execution of their commission, would not of itself be a stumbling-block, as may be seen from the charge of hypocrisy preferred by Christ against the Pharisees, for the honour they paid to the prophets who had been killed by their forefathers, and for their saying, that if they had been in the days of their fathers, they "would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Matt. xxiii. 29, 30. Also from John the Baptist, who, though the Pharisees did not believe in him, and he was put to death by Herod, was nevertheless considered by the Jews as a prophet; this we learn from the testimony of the evangelists, and from Josephus. The history of Socrates supplies sufficient proof that a violent death, even though inflicted by a judicial sentence, would not of itself lessen, in the eye of the Greek, the character of a teacher of religion and virtue.

As, therefore, neither our Saviour's being by birth a Jew, nor the violent death which he suffered, could of themselves cause the offence taken, both by the Jew and Gentile, to the preaching of Christ crucified, something distinct from either of these facts must have been the cause of this offence. This something I conceive to be the efficacy ascribed by the apostles to the sufferings, death, and mediation

of Christ, as the Son of God, towards the salvation of men, through faith in his name. This doctrine of salvation from sin and its consequences, through the mediation of a crucified Saviour, which brought all human wisdom to the foot of the cross, and took away from man all self-sufficiency, was a stumbling-block to the contracted worldly views of the Jew, who did not extend his hopes of deliverance beyond the temporal aggrandizement of his nation, by a deliverance from the Roman yoke; and it was foolishness to the philosophic pride of the Greek. The unbeliever, whether Jew or Gentile, could not reconcile the power which Christ must have possessed, if he were the Son of God, with his patient and lamb-like endurance of the painful and ignominious death of the cross. "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross; likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save; if he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God." Matt. xxvii. 39—43.

That the Christian's God was a crucified man, was objected to by the heathens. Celsus, an Epicurean philosopher, in a work written expressly

against the Christians, which is now lost, but considerable portions of it are preserved in Origen's answer to him, says, "it became not a God to flee, nor to be taken and executed." Again, "He pretends," says Origen, "that Christians argue miserably, when they say that the Son of God is the Word himself: and he thinks he makes good his charge, in that after we have affirmed the Son of God to be the Word, we do not shew him to be a pure and holy Word, but a miserable man, condemned, scourged, and crucified<sup>5</sup>." Justin Martyr, who wrote somewhat earlier than Celsus, had also to vindicate these narratives from the objections of the heathen.<sup>6</sup>

*See.*

Thus the Unitarian notion, that the early Christians had any inducement to fabricate such accounts

<sup>5</sup> Lardner's Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, Vol. II. p. 281, and Contr. Cels. lib. ii. §. 34, p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> Because Justin Martyr, in his Apology addressed to Heathens, using the *argumentum ad hominem*, opposes their objection to the miraculous conception of Christ, by their own accounts of the origin of their heroes and demigods, he has been accused of superstitious credulity. He neither admits the truth of their accounts, nor of their resemblance with the birth of Christ; for in the same Apology, on the Prophecy in Isaiah vii. 14, he says, "But that such as understand not the prophecy before us, may not turn the objections upon us, which we charge upon the poets, and father this conception upon a lustful Jove, I shall endeavour to set the words in a clearer light. This expression, therefore, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive,' manifestly declares, that a virgin shall conceive without any carnal concurrence, for upon that she must cease to be a virgin; but the power of God coming down upon the virgin overshadowed her, and made her conceive in a pure state of virginity."—*Reeve's Edit.* 1709, Vol. I. p. 66.

of the conception and birth of Christ, as are contained in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, to lessen the prejudices of unbelievers, is opposed by the historical fact, that their prejudices were only increased by this part of the Gospel. And this fact is admitted by the Unitarians themselves. In a defence of the Improved Version against a critique on it in the Quarterly Review, the writer says, "As to the testimony of the opponents of Christianity, it is in this case of no consequence whatsoever. They were not likely to take much pains to distinguish genuine from supposititious scriptures; and, least of all, to discard a story which furnished them, as is well known, with so many plausible topics for ridicule and banter."<sup>7</sup>

Here we have a specimen of the versatility of Unitarian talent in argument. Sometimes we are informed, that some gentile convert, or converts, to remove the obloquy which attached to Christianity from the mean original of its founder, invented the fable of the miraculous conception. But when the evidence of the early opponents of Christianity are appealed to in favour of the authenticity of this part of the evangelical history, it then appears, that the aforesaid gentile converts so entirely mistook the prejudices which Christianity presented to their quondam philosophical associates, that the means

---

<sup>7</sup> Monthly Repository, Vol. IV. p. 418. Remarks upon the Account, &c. in the Quarterly Review, dated Hackney, August 1st, 1809, and signed B.

they adopted to remove, were only calculated to increase those prejudices. Notwithstanding the assertion of the Unitarian, that the testimony of the opponents of Christianity is of no consequence whatever, the testimony of an adversary, when it tends to confirm the cause he is opposing, is valuable; and such is the testimony of Celsus, when it confirms the authenticity of the present books of the New Testament, especially as he does not appear to have had recourse to any doubtful or apocryphal writings in his work against Christianity, but only to books received by the Christians of the time in which he wrote; and although he mixes with the facts, which he derives from the Gospels, some malicious insinuations and misrepresentations, they are easily distinguished, and they have been properly adverted to and rejected by Origen, as false and unfounded. Celsus notices, in his work, most of the events connected with the miraculous conception and birth of Christ, as recorded by Matthew and Luke. The publicity of these narratives, and their reception by the Christian church as authentic, about the middle of the second century, is thus established by the evidence of an adversary.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> I cannot forbear making a remark on the evidence of Celsus. From the manner in which he attacks Christianity, the *fact* of the miraculous conception, and the *doctrine* of Christ being the Word or Logos, must have been generally entertained by the Christians when he wrote; consequently, Justin could not be, what Mr. Belsham says he was, "the inventor of the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence." The

If the Unitarians have erred in the motive which they attribute to the authors of the introductory chapters of Matthew and Luke, viz. that they designed to elevate their Lord and Master to a rank which they knew did not belong to him, it is not difficult to discover, in the foregoing passages quoted from the Unitarians, the motive which induced the attempt to expunge the introductory chapters of Matthew and Luke from the Sacred Records.

When Mrs. Catharine Cappe transmitted to the Monthly Repository the paper written by her late husband, Mr. Newcombe Cappe, from which I have given an extract in the last chapter, (p. 63), she says, she sends it to the Monthly Repository, "for the object, principally, of proving, that the commonly received opinion may be abandoned, even by minds not deficient in piety, learning, or critical acumen, without giving up the authenticity of the disputed chapters." The commonly received opinion, which the Unitarian abandons, and exerts all his energies to get abandoned by the other professors of the Christian name, is too well known to require explanation; and we are here plainly informed, that we are

---

charge might, with much more propriety, be preferred against John the Evangelist; but this, by making the doctrine *apostolical*, would frustrate the purpose of the Unitarian. Neither can we concede, to the *ipse dixit* of Mr. Belsham, that such an adversary as Celsus would not have improved, to his advantage, any dispute among Christians, with respect to the authenticity of their sacred books, or any portion of them, had he known any such dispute to have existed.

indebted to the Unitarian's aversion to this opinion, for his opposition to the evangelical accounts of the miraculous conception and birth of Christ. — This bias of the Unitarian will further appear upon an investigation of the notes and criticisms of the Improved Version of the New Testament.

The Editors of the Improved Version have printed in *italic* characters the last nine verses of the first chapter, and the whole of the second chapter, of St. Matthew's Gospel, for which they assign the following, among other reasons. "The remainder of this chapter, and the whole of the second, are printed in italics, as an intimation that they are of doubtful authority. They are indeed to be found in all the MSS. and versions which are now extant; but, from the testimony of Epiphanius and Jerome, we are assured, that they were wanting in the copies used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites, that is, by the ancient Hebrew Christians, for whose instruction, probably, this Gospel was originally written, and to whom the account of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ could not be unacceptable, if it had been found in the genuine narrative."

See

The Editors rather consulted their wishes than their critical judgment, when they confounded the terms Nazarene, Ebionite, and ancient Hebrew Christians with each other, as synonymous. The epithet Nazarene only once occurs in the New



Testament, Acts xxiv. 5, where it is used by an adversary as a term of reproach, and applied indiscriminately to the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. That it was not adopted by the primitive Hebrew Christians, is evident, from Agrippa's Address to the Apostle Paul, who was one of them; Acts xxvi. 28, also from 1 Pet. iv. 16. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, who flourished about A. D. 178, is the first writer who mentions the Ebionites: he mentions them as a sect separated from the body of Christian believers, who opposed the doctrines preached by the apostles, and rejected the greater part of the books of the New Testament. They only made use of an Hebrew Gospel, which they called Matthew's, contemning and rejecting all Paul's Epistles, and called him an apostate from the law. They appear to have been divided into two sects, one of which believed that Christ was born of a virgin; this was denied by the other, which considered him to have been born of Joseph and Mary. In the time of Epiphanius and Jerome, those judaizing Christians who departed the least from the apostolic faith, were called Nazarenes.

Such were the sentiments of the Ebionites, on whose fidelity the Unitarians repose, for preserving pure and unmutilated the text of the Gospel of St. Matthew. If a deviation from the apostolic doctrines, and a rejection of whole books of the Sacred Writings of unquestionable authority,

serve as a passport of recommendation to an ancient writer or sect, the Ebionites cannot be said to want the necessary credentials. And they have not failed to serve as a passport of recommendation to the Unitarian,<sup>9</sup> who considers the rejection of all the Gospels by the Ebionites, except their Hebrew copy, as a pledge that "they would then be particularly careful to keep this Gospel pure and uncorrupt." It is indeed granted that they erred in rejecting all Paul's epistles; "but how this invalidates their evidence in the case of Matthew's Gospel, I do not perceive," says B., in his Answer to the Quarterly Review. Whatever may be thought of this writer's powers of perception, the plainest understanding need not be at a loss to conceive *how this invalidates their evidence in the case of Matthew's Gospel*. A sect which rejects whole books of authentic Scripture, because they are inimical to its own notions, offers very indifferent security for its care to preserve from mutilation and alteration the text of those books which it professes to retain: its conduct, at least, renders suspicious

---

<sup>9</sup> "I must acknowledge," says Mr. Belsham, "a consciousness of something like a bias in favour of a heretic, whether ancient or modern." This is the language of one of the Editors of the Improved Version; it is an honest expression of the bias which the Unitarian feels in favour of the attempts of the Ebionites and others to pervert the apostolical doctrines. We are obliged to Mr. Belsham for such an open declaration: it enables us to appreciate, at its proper value, the judgment of him and his brethren upon the evidence afforded by the ancient fathers to doctrines which clash with their opinions.

every thing which it offers to us as genuine Scripture, unless corroborated by less questionable evidence. The fragments which are left of the Hebrew copies of the Gospel or Gospels used by the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, confirm the truth of these remarks; and as the Editors of the Improved Version attach so much critical importance to this Gospel, as to adduce its authority in opposition to our present Greek text, it will be necessary to examine its claims. I shall notice the early Christian writers who have either referred to or quoted this Gospel. The citations made by the Anti-Nicene fathers appear to be from the Gospel used by the Nazarenes.

HEGESIPPUS is the earliest who appears to have been acquainted with a Gospel in the Hebrew. This we learn from Eusebius, who says that Hegessipus "has discoursed or said some things concerning the Hebrew Gospel, and the Syriac and Hebrew language;"<sup>10</sup> but is silent with respect to the opinion entertained by Hegesippus of that Gospel. From an extract I have before given, it appears that this Hebrew Christian received Matthew's account of the slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem by Herod; therefore, if the copy of Matthew's Gospel used by him as authentic was in Hebrew, it must have

---

<sup>10</sup> Euseb. Eccles. Hist. Book IV. c. 22. I adopt Mr. Jones's Translation, as most agreeable to the context. See his Canon, Vol. I. Part. II. c. xxviii. p. 296. Oxon. 1798.

contained the second chapter, and consequently the first.

CLEMENT of Alexandria, who flourished about A. D. 194, has a quotation from a Hebrew Gospel. His words are:—"And it is written in the Gospel according to the Hebrews, he who admires shall reign, and he who reigns shall be at ease."<sup>11</sup> This is the only quotation from, or mention of this Gospel by Clement. The passage here cited is not in any of our present Gospels, and the manner in which it is cited by Clement proves that it was not in them in his time. It is certain that Matthew's Gospel received by Clement contained the first chapter. Lardner judiciously observes that "the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which is but once cited by Clement, was probably unknown to him: for it being written in Hebrew, he could not read it in a language he was unacquainted with. It is likely the single passage cited out of it was taken second-hand from some author who had made use of it."<sup>12</sup>

ORIGEN's knowledge of the Hebrew language gave him an advantage over the last writer. In the small portion that remains of his numerous works, we meet with two quotations from the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

First, in his Commentaries on John:—"But if any one admits the Gospel according to the

---

<sup>11</sup> Stromat. lib. ii. p. 380. See Jones's Canon, Vol. I. Part II. c. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. II. p. 528. Book I. c. xxii. §. 42.

Hebrews, where our Saviour himself says, Just now my mother, the Holy Ghost, took me by one of my hairs, and carried me to the great mountain Thabor.”<sup>13</sup>

Second, in his Commentaries on Matthew:—  
 “ But let us consider this place otherwise. It is written in a certain Gospel, which is called according to the Hebrews: if indeed any one is pleased to receive it, not as of authority, but for illustration of the present question. ‘ A certain rich man,’ says that Gospel, ‘ said to him: Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may live? He said unto him: Man, keep the law and the prophets. He answered him: That I have done. He said to him: Go, sell all that thou hast, and distribute among the poor, and come, follow me. But the rich man began to scratch his head, and it did not please him. And the Lord said to him: How sayest thou, I have kept the law and the prophets? seeing it is written in the law, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: and behold, many of thy brethren, sons of Abraham, are clothed with rags, ready to perish for hunger, whilst thy house is filled with all sorts of good things, and nothing goes out of it to them. And turning about, he said to his disciple Simon, who was sitting by him: Simon, son of Joanna,

---

<sup>13</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part. II. Vol. III. p. 323, Book I. c. xxxviii. §. 24. Comm. in Joan. p. 58. D. E. See also Jones's Canon, Vol. I. pp. 268, 269.

it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." <sup>14</sup>

These two passages, as quoted by Origen, prove that the text of the Hebrew Gospel read by him was not the same as that of our Greek Gospel, and that he did not consider the former to be of any authority.

EUSEBIUS, in his Ecclesiastical History, written about A. D. 326, speaking of apocryphal or doubtful writings, says:—"And among these some do number the Gospel according to the Hebrews, with which those of the Hebrews that have embraced the faith of Christ are chiefly delighted." Again: "They [the Ebionites] made use only of the Gospel according to the Hebrews; the rest they made small account of." <sup>15</sup>

If Eusebius had considered the Gospel according to the Hebrews the genuine Gospel of Matthew, he would not have distinguished it as a different Gospel from that received by the church. That the Gospels of Matthew and Luke received by Eusebius contained the introductory chapters of our present Greek copies, admits of no doubt. See Book I. c. viii. and other parts of his Ecclesiastical History.

<sup>14</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. III. p. 322, Book I. c. xxxviii. §. 2. Tract 8 in Matt. S. I. p. 73. Bas.

<sup>15</sup> Euseb. Eccles.-Hist. lib. III. c. 25, 27.

Our inquiries respecting the Hebrew Gospel used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites, are brought as low down as the Nicene Council, from which it will be seen that but little notice is taken of it by the Anti-Nicene fathers, and that little proves that it was not received by them as genuine and authentic;—that its text varied from the Greek copy of Matthew, whilst the latter was acknowledged in the most public manner to be the genuine Gospel of Matthew;—and that part of it, the genuineness of which is now disputed, was received by Hegesippus, a Hebrew Christian of the second century.

But the writers from whom the most correct information is to be obtained relative to this Hebrew Gospel, are Epiphanius and Jerome, who were contemporary, and lived in the latter end of the fourth century.

EPIPHANIUS says:—1st, “They [the Nazarenes] have the Gospel of Matthew most entire in the Hebrew language among them: for truly this is preserved among them as it was at first in Hebrew characters. But I know not whether they have taken away the genealogy from Abraham to Christ.”<sup>16</sup>

2d, “They [the Ebionites] also receive the Gospel according to Matthew. For this, both

---

<sup>16</sup> Jones’s Canon, Vol. I. p. 271. Epiphani. Hæres. 29, §. 9.

they and the Cerinthians make use of, and no other. They call it *The Gospel according to the Hebrews.*"<sup>17</sup>

3d, "In that Gospel, which they (i. e. the Ebionites) have called the Gospel according to Matthew, which is not entire and perfect, but corrupted and curtailed, and which they call *The Hebrew Gospel*, it is written: 'That there was a certain man called Jesus, and he being about thirty years of age, made choice of us. And coming to Capernaum, he entered into the house of Simon, called Peter, and opening his mouth, said: When I passed by the lake of Tiberias, I chose John and James the sons of Zebedee, and Simon, and Andrew, and Thaddeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas Iscariot; and thee, Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, I called, and thou didst follow me. I will therefore that ye be my twelve apostles for a testimony to Israel. And John the Baptist was baptizing, and the Pharisees went out to him, and were baptized, and all Jerusalem. And John had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat (according to that Gospel) was wild honey, the taste of which was like manna, or as cakes made with honey and oil.' Thus they change the true account into a falsehood, and for locusts put cakes made with oil and honey. The beginning of their

---

<sup>17</sup> Jones's Canon, Vol. I. p. 271. Epiph. Hæres. 30, quæ est Ebionit. §. 3.



Gospel was this:—‘It came to pass in the days of Herod, the King of Judea, that John came baptizing with the baptism of repentance in the river Jordan, who was reported to be of the family of Aaron, the high priest, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and all people went out after him.’”—“Also Cerinthus and Carpocrates, using this same Gospel of theirs, would prove from the beginning of that Gospel according to St. Matthew, viz. by the genealogy, that Christ proceeded from the seed of Joseph and Mary. But they (viz. the Ebionites) have quite other sentiments; for they have taken away the genealogy from Matthew, and accordingly begin their Gospel, as I above said, with these words: ‘It came to pass in the days of Herod, King of Judea,’” &c.<sup>18</sup>

4th, “They (i. e. the Ebionites) do not say that he (Christ) was begotten of the Father, but made as one of the angels; but being greater than them, he has dominion over them, and all the works of the Almighty, and that he came and taught that which is contained in their Gospel, viz. ‘I came to abolish sacrifices; and, unless ye cease to offer sacrifices, the wrath (of God) shall not cease from you.’ And such as these are their tenets.”<sup>19</sup>

JEROME had not only seen the Hebrew Gospel,

---

<sup>18</sup> Jones’s Canon, Vol. I, p. 271. Epiphan. Heres. 30, §. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pp. 271—275.

used by the Nazarenes, but translated it into Greek and Latin; these translations are lost, but the occasional notice which Jerome has taken of this Gospel in his works, and the passages which he has quoted from it, supply us with data, from which we may draw a tolerably correct judgment of the claims this Gospel has to be considered as the genuine Gospel of Matthew.

1st, In his Note on Matt. ii. 5, Jerome observes, that the Hebrew Gospel reads Bethlehem of Judah, and not Bethlehem of Judea.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> “ ‘ Librariorum hic error est, putamus enim ab Evangelista primo editum, sicut in ipso Hebraico legimus, Judæ non Judæa.’ Now,” says Michaelis, “ the words ‘ in ipso Hebraico,’ can have no other meaning than ‘ in the Hebrew Gospel;’ for they cannot refer to the Hebrew of the Prophet Micah, whence the quotation was borrowed, because in that place there is neither Bethlehem Judæ, nor Bethlehem Judæa, but Bethlehem Ephratha. Yet it is difficult to comprehend how Jerome could distinguish in the Hebrew *Jude* from *Judea*, for both are expressed by יהודה 9. I suspect therefore that *Hebraico* is a mistake for *Græco*, since the Greek has really ‘Ιούδα.”<sup>10</sup> (*Marsh’s Michaelis*, Vol. III. Part I. chap. IV. §. 9, p. 166.) I shall subjoin Dr. Marsh’s notes on the latter part of the above passage, marked 9 and 10.—“ 9. It is true,” says Dr. Marsh, “ that in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, Judah and Judea are both expressed by יהודה. But if the term ‘ Hebrew’ be applied to the Gospel of the Nazarenes, it is equivalent to the term ‘ Chaldee;’ and in Chaldee and Syriac, Judah and Judea were distinguished, the former being written יהודא, the latter יהוד, without Aleph. At least, in the Syriac version of the New Testament, ‘Ιουδας is always expressed by ܝܘܕܐ, and ‘Ιουδαῖα is always expressed by ܝܘܕܝܐ, (See, for instance, Matt. ii. 1, 22, iii. 1, 5, iv. 25, xix. 1, xxiv. 16), except in one instance, namely, Matt. ii. 5, where there is ܝܘܕܐ ܕܝܘܕܐ, as if the Greek were, not Βηθλεὲμ τῆς ‘Ιουδαίας, but Βηθλεὲμ τῆς ‘Ιουδα. In Matth. ii. 6, where the Greek is γῆ ‘Ιουδα, we again find ܝܘܕܐ in the Syriac.

2d, " Matthew, also called Levi, who became from a publican an apostle, was the first who composed a Gospel of Christ; and, for the sake of those who believed in Christ among the Jews, wrote it in the Hebrew language and letters, but it is uncertain who it was that translated it into Greek. Moreover, the Hebrew itself is, to this time, preserved in the library of Cæsarea, which Pamphilus the Martyr, with much diligence, collected. The Nazarenes, who live in Berœa, a city of Syria, and make use of this volume, granted me the favour of writing it out, in which (Gospel) there is this observable, that wherever the evangelist either writes himself, or introduces our Saviour as citing any passage out of the Old Testament, he does not follow the Septuagint, but the Hebrew copies, of which there are two instances, viz. that, ' Out of

---

" 10. This is impossible: for Jerome's observation is made not on γῆ 'Ιούδα, ver. 6, but on Βηθλεὲμ τῆς 'Ιουδαίας, ver. 5, where he proposed likewise to read 'Ιούδα, and really altered the Latin version to Bethlehem Judæ, which is the reading of the Vulgate at this very day. Since therefore Jerome expressly declares that where Βηθλεὲμ 'Ιουδαίας was the reading of the Greek text, Βηθλεὲμ 'Ιούδα was the reading of the Hebrew [that is, Chaldee] text, since 'Ιούδας and 'Ιουδαία are distinctly expressed in Syriac and Chaldee; and since the Syriac version, at Matt. ii. 5, has the very reading which Jerome says he saw in the Chaldee (for ' in ipso Hebraico' here signifies ' in ipso Chaldaico'), there is no necessity for having recourse to violent conjectures: and we may safely conclude that Jerome really meant the Chaldee (or, as the fathers call it, Hebrew) Gospel of the Nazarenes, and consequently that this Gospel contained at least the second, if not the first chapter of St. Matthew." (*Marsh's Michaelis*, Vol. III. Part II. p. 130.)

Egypt I have called my son;’ and that, ‘He shall be called a Nazarene.’”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> As some critics have differed in their construction of this passage, I shall give Michaelis and Marsh’s observations on it:—“‘Matthæus, qui et Levi, ex publicano Apostolus, primus in Judæa, propter eos qui ex circumcisione crediderant, Evangelium Christi Hebraicis literis verbisque composuit. Quod qui postea in Græcum transtulerit, non satis certum est. Porro ipsum Hebraicum habetur usque hodie in Cæsariensi bibliotheca, quam Pamphilus Martyr studiosissime confecit. Mihi quoque a Nazaræis, qui in Berœa, urbe Syriæ, hoc volumine utuntur, describendi facultas fuit. In quo animadvertendum, quod ubicumque Evangelista sive ex persona sua, sive ex persona Domini salvatoris, veteris scripturæ testimoniis abutitur, non sequatur septuaginta translatorum auctoritatem, sed Hebraicam: e quibus illa duo sunt, ‘Ex Ægypto vocavi filium meum,’ et, ‘Quoniam Nazaræus vocabitur.’”

“Here it is evident,” says Michaelis, “that if the words in *quo animadvertendum* refer to *hoc volumine* in the sentence immediately preceding, the Hebrew Gospel used by the Nazarenes must have contained at least the second chapter; for the two quotations, ‘Ex Ægypto vocavi filium meum,’ and ‘Quoniam Nazaræus vocabitur,’ are in Matt. ii. 15, 23. On the other hand, since Jerom at the beginning of this passage had spoken of St. Matthew in general terms, it is possible that he meant to refer to the evangelist, without having in view the Gospel of the Nazarenes in particular. At different times, therefore, I have entertained different opinions on this subject; but it appears to me at present, that Jerom really meant the Gospel of the Nazarenes, and consequently that it contained the second chapter.”<sup>11</sup>—*Marsh’s Michaelis*, Vol. III. Part I. Chap. IV. §. 9, pp. 167, 168.

Dr. Herbert Marsh, in a note on this passage, says:—“11. It is really doing violence to the construction to refer the relative ‘quo’ to any other antecedent than ‘volumine,’ which immediately precedes it; and the only reason, why a doubt has arisen on this subject is, that a full stop has been falsely placed after ‘fuit,’ whereas there ought to be only a comma. If the passage were pointed thus, no one would remain in doubt:—Mihi quoque a Nazaræis, qui in Berœa, urbe Syriæ, hoc volumine utuntur, describendi facultas fuit, in quo animadvertendum, quod ubicumque Evangelista, &c. Another reason for referring ‘quo’ to ‘volumine’ is, that Jerom has used the relative ‘quod’ in the sentence immediately preceding, and referred it to ‘evangelium.’ This passage therefore, as well as the preceding,

3d, "The Gospel also, which is called *according to the Hebrews*, and which I lately translated into Greek and Latin, and which Origen often used, relates, 'That after our Saviour's resurrection, when our Lord had given the linen cloth to the priest's servant, he went to James and appeared to him; for James had sworn, that he would not eat bread from that hour, in which he drank the cup of the Lord, till he should see the Lord risen from the dead. And a little after, the Lord said, Bring the table and the bread; and then it is added, He took the bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to James the Just, and said to him, My brother, eat thy bread; for the Son of man is risen from the dead.'"<sup>22</sup>

4th, "In the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, which is written in the Chaldee and Syriac language, which the Nazarenes use, (and is) that according to the twelve apostles; or, as most think, *according to Matthew*: which is in the library of Cæsarea, there is the following history: Behold, the mother and brethren of Christ spake to him, 'John the Baptist baptizes for the remission of sins; let us go and be baptized of him.' He said to them, 'In what have I sinned, that I have need

---

affords a proof that Jerom found at least the second chapter of St. Matthew in the Gospel of the Nazarenes."—*Ibid.* Vol. III. Part II. p. 131. Dr. Marsh's construction of this passage is so consistent with the context, that it is rather surprising that any doubt should have been entertained respecting it.

<sup>22</sup> Jones's Canon, Vol. I. pp. 276, 277. De Vir. Illustr. in Jacobo.

to go and be baptized by him? unless my saying this proceeds from ignorance.' And in the same volume it is said, 'If thy brother offend thee by any word, and make thee satisfaction, though it be seven times in a day, thou must forgive him.' Simon, his disciple, said to him, 'What! seven times in a day?' The Lord answered and said to him, 'I tell thee also, even till seventy times seven.'"<sup>23</sup>

5th, "Whoever—will believe the Gospel which is entitled 'The Gospel according to the Hebrews,' which I lately translated, in which our Saviour is introduced, saying, 'Just now my mother, the Holy Ghost, laid hold on me by one of my hairs,' will not scruple to say that the Word of God (i. e. Christ) was born of the Spirit, &c."<sup>24</sup>

6th, "In that Gospel which is written in Hebrew letters, we read, not that the veil of the temple was rent, but that a lintel or beam of a prodigious size fell down."<sup>25</sup>

7th, "For when the apostles supposed him to be a spirit, or, according to the Gospel which the Nazarenes read, an 'incorporeal dæmon,'" he said to them, 'Why are ye troubled, &c.'"<sup>26</sup>

Epiphanius has a passage from the Ebionite Gospel relating to the baptism of Christ. Jerome

<sup>23</sup> Jones's Canon, Vol. I. pp. 277, 278. *Adversus Pelagian*. lib. iii. in princip.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 279. Comment. in Mic. vii. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 281. Epist. ad Hedib. exlix.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 282. Præfat. lib. xviii. Comment. in Jesai.

has also a passage from the Nazarene Gospel adverting to the same event. I have reserved these two accounts to present them to the reader in parallel columns.

## EBIONITE GOSPEL.

*From Epiphanius.*

“ — and as he [Jesus] ascended out of the water, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Holy Spirit of God, in the form of a dove, descending and entering into him, and a voice was made from heaven, saying, ‘Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;’ and then another, ‘I have this day begotten thee;’ and suddenly there shone around the place a great light, which, when John saw, he said to him, ‘Who art thou, Lord?’ and then another voice from heaven came to him, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,’” &c.<sup>27</sup>

## NAZARENE GOSPEL.

*From Jerome.*

“It came to pass, when the Lord ascended from the water, the whole fountain of the Holy Ghost descended and rested upon him, and said to him, ‘My Son, among (or during all the time of) all the prophets, I was waiting for thy coming, that I might rest upon thee, for thou art my rest, thou art my first-begotten Son, who shall reign to everlasting ages.’”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Jones's Canon, Vol. I. p. 273. Epiphan. Hæres. 30, §. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 278. Jerome, lib. iv. Comment. in Jesai. c. xi. 2.

These two passages prove that the text of the Hebrew Gospel translated by Jerome was not the same as that cited by Epiphanius. By the extracts Nos. 1 and 2, above given from Jerome, it appears that the Gospel of the Nazarenes contained that part of the first two chapters of Matthew, which embrace the account of the miraculous conception: whether it also contained the genealogy, is, from Jerome's silence, difficult to be determined with certainty; yet this silence affords a presumptive evidence that it did; since such an omission was not likely to have been passed over unnoticed by Jerome in his Commentary on Matthew, as he has noticed slighter variations between this Gospel and the received Greek text. The retention of the account of the miraculous conception in the Hebrew Gospel used by the Nazarene Christians, confirms the truth of Epiphanius's description of it, as being more perfect and entire than the Gospel used by the Ebionites.—(See the extracts from him, Nos. 1 and 3.)

The difference between the sentiments held by the Nazarenes and those of the Ebionites, also assists us to discover what they respectively received or rejected of the introductory chapters of Matthew's Gospel. Of the Nazarenes, Jerome says, "They profess that they believe in Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rose again from the dead,



the same in whom we also believe.”<sup>29</sup> From the words of Jerome it may be concluded, that the Nazarenes believed in the proper deity of Christ, since otherwise they could not be said to have the same belief as those who must be intended by Jerome when he uses the pronoun *we*. But waving this consideration, if there were no other proof that the Nazarene Hebrew Gospel translated by Jerome contained the account of the miraculous conception, this passage from Jerome would be sufficient; Christ’s birth of the Virgin Mary is a *FACT*, the belief of which implies a faith in the authenticity of the record which relates it. Now this fact was certainly believed by the Nazarenes; their Gospel must therefore have contained the account of the miraculous conception. We learn also from Jerome’s Commentaries on Isaiah, that the Nazarenes received the writings of the Apostle Paul, and of the other apostles.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, the Ebionites believed Christ to be the son of Joseph and Mary, born as other men; they also rejected the other three Gospels, and the writings of the apostle Paul, as it has been already observed from Irenæus.

---

<sup>29</sup> Lardner’s Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, 4to edit. Vol. I. p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 19. Jerome appears to have had the means of knowing more of the Nazarenes, or those of the Ebionite Christians who departed the least from the apostolic faith, than the earlier fathers; consequently his testimony, where it differs from theirs, is most to be depended on. Origen makes a distinction somewhat similar to that of Jerome, between the Hebrew Christians of his own time.

It is thus indubitably clear, from the testimony of Jerome, whether it relates to the HEBREW GOSPEL of the Nazarenes, or to the sentiments of the Nazarenes, that the account of the miraculous conception and birth of Christ must have been in their Gospel. We may therefore indulge the hope, that Mr. Belsham will cease from representing it as "a story which would not bear to be told in the country where it is reported to have happened, and in a language which the inhabitants could understand<sup>31</sup>." His question, "How do we account for the omission of this extraordinary narrative in the copies of the Ebionites<sup>32</sup>?" is quickly disposed of. It is accounted for, as the Ebionites' rejection of Paul's Epistles is accounted for:—it did not coincide with their notions.

The preceding investigation goes to prove, that the Nazarene Hebrew copy of Matthew's Gospel, contained the introductory chapters of our Greek copy, and the proofs appear clear and decisive; but supposing that they had failed, we cannot admit the omission of a passage in the Nazarene copy as any proof against its authenticity, because this Gospel in several instances (see the extracts from it, Nos. 3, 4, and 6) contradicts the other three Gospels of Mark, Luke and John, whereas the corresponding passages in our Greek copy of Matthew agree with them.

The Unitarian is therefore reduced to the

---

<sup>31</sup> Letters on Arianism, by T. Belsham, p. 68.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

dilemma, either of establishing the authenticity of the Nazarene Gospel on the ruins of all our present Gospels, or of ceasing in his attempts to correct our Greek text of Matthew by it. For whatever subordinate merit might attach to this Hebrew Gospel as a whole, (of which we cannot now judge, the original, as well as Jerome's translation, being lost), the fragments which are left, destroy its authority as the genuine Gospel of Matthew. That Matthew's Gospel was the basis of the Nazarene, is probable, but with additions from Luke's Gospel and from oral tradition. The extract from Jerome, No. 7, is evidently borrowed from Luke xxiv. 37, 38; and the phrase *incorporeal dæmon*, probably from Ignatius's Epistle to the Smyrnæans. Jerome has been too hasty in his conclusion, from Ignatius's use of the phrase *incorporeal dæmon*, that he quoted it from the Nazarene Gospel. Ignatius does not allude to this Gospel in any of his epistles, neither was this to be expected of one who, it is most probable, did not understand the language in which it was written. Considering the circumstances in which Ignatius was when he wrote his epistles, he probably quoted Luke from memory; and as to the phraseology, it seems, from the preceding section, where "incorporeal" and "dæmoniac" are used to designate disembodied spirits, that it was familiar to Ignatius: the sense is substantially the same as in Luke, whose very words are in part adopted, as will be seen by comparing them with each other:

LUKE xxiv. 39.

IGNATIUS.

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have.<sup>32</sup>

Take, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal demon.

---

It is probable, for the reasons above mentioned, that the Nazarene Gospel was composed not only after Luke's Gospel, but after Ignatius wrote his Epistle to the Church of Smyrna, that is, after his martyrdom, A. D. 107. That its variations from the present received Greek text of Matthew were numerous, is evident, since Jerome would not have translated it into Greek, if there were no further difference between it and the Greek text than what proceeds from various readings.

Some writers have supposed that the Gospel used by the Ebionites was the same as that used by the Nazarenes; they have been led into this opinion by some of the Greek fathers, who did not distinguish between these two Gospels, either through their ignorance of the language in which they were written, or because they had seen only one of the Gospels: thus Origen quotes the Nazarene copy—Epiphanius, the Ebionite. The difference of opinion, as stated by Origen, on the fact of the

---

<sup>32</sup> Jones's Canon, Part II. Chap. xxvii. Vol. I. p. 294.

miraculous conception, between the Hebrew Christians, is a strong presumptive evidence that, in his time, a difference must have existed between the Hebrew Gospels received by these respective Hebrew converts. In the time of Epiphanius, we have positive evidence that such difference existed.

Whether the Ebionite Gospel was only a corruption of the Nazarene, as the latter was of Matthew's Gospel, or a distinct composition, cannot now be ascertained with certainty, for want of sufficient data. It bears evident marks of being a more recent composition, than our four genuine Gospels. In the quotation, No. 3, from Epiphanius, of John the Baptist it says, his food was "wild honey, the taste of which was like manna, or as cakes made with honey and oil:" in the original, μέλι ἄγριον οὗ ἡ γεῦσις ἦν τοῦ Μάννα, ὡς ἐγκρίς ἐν ἐλαίῳ. This has the appearance of being translated from the Greek Gospel of St. Matthew, the translator reading ἐγκρίδες instead of ἀκρίδες.<sup>33</sup>

Again, Epiphanius says, "The beginning of their Gospel was this: It came to pass in the days of Herod, the King of Judea, that John came baptizing with the baptism of repentance, in the river Jordan; who was reported to be of the family of Aaron, the

---

<sup>33</sup> See Jones's Canon, Vol. I. p. 306, who further remarks, that the translator being a Jew, accustomed to the use of the Septuagint Greek Bibles, very probably was led thereto by the Septuagint translation of those words, Exod. xvi. 31, Τὸ δὲ γεῦμα αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐγκρίς ἐν μέλιτι, or, as it is in Num. xi. 8, Καὶ ἦν ἡ ἡδονὴ αὐτοῦ ὥσει γεῦμα ἐγκρίς ἐξ ἐλαίου.

High Priest, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and all people went out after him." Of this passage, the learned Michaelis says, "This strange historical blunder, which makes John the Baptist preach in the time of Herod, King of Judea, who had been dead nearly thirty years when John began to preach, is a sufficient proof that St. Matthew was not the author of this passage; for no man, who was a contemporary with John, could have imagined that Herod was then king of Judea. The passage appears to have been fabricated by an absurd composition of two different passages in St. Luke's Gospel, namely, chap. i. 5, and iii. 1—3.<sup>34</sup>

But it seems that this objection of Michaelis has been discovered, by "A Calm Inquirer," to be a "cavil unworthy a man of sense," because "no child that was taught to read ever mistook Herod the King or Tetrarch of Galilee, who beheaded John, and who was living at the time of our Lord's crucifixion, for that Herod who died in the reign of Augustus, and who was the father of Herod the Tetrarch." I know not whether the Editors of the Improved Version will submit to be ranked beneath children in the art of criticism. They have copied this blunder into their Improved Version without any animadversion, though any child who could read might detect it. To lessen the magnitude of the blunder, *king* and *tetrarch* are

---

<sup>34</sup> Marsh's Michaelis, Vol. III. Part I. p. 179, Note (s).

introduced in the above paragraph as synonymous; but this cannot be admitted. "A Calm Inquirer" may, if he can, produce an example from sacred or profane history, of Herod Antipas being entitled *King of Galilee*. That he might be occasionally called *The King*, in a loose and indefinite sense, as exercising most of the powers attached to that title, is not denied; but no writer acquainted with the history of that period would have called him *King of Galilee*, much less *King of Judea*. The credulity of "A Calm Inquirer" and his colleagues may digest this double blunder as the mere inaccuracy of a transcriber, but they must in future forbear laughing at the plenitude of faith in subscribers to the Thirty-nine Articles.

A Calm Inquirer's main argument, or rather bold assertion, (in order to get rid of this anachronism, into which the fabricator of the Ebionite Gospels falls at the very beginning of his history,) is proved to be fallacious, by the fact, that the blunder, which he says no child taught to read could make, was actually made as early as the second century, not by a child, but by a great philosopher. This is no other than Celsus; of whose work against the Christians, entitled *The True Word*, the following extract is taken from Origen's answer to him, as given by Lardner.

"After these things," says Origen, "the Jew in Celsus, instead of the Magians in the Gospels, says, It was given out by Jesus, that Chaldeans

were moved, at the time of his birth, to come to worship him as a God, when he was but a little child; and *that this was told to Herod the Tetrarch*, who issued out an order to have all killed, who had been born there about that time; intending to kill him with the rest," &c. Lardner has a note on the part of this extract distinguished by italics, which I will give verbatim.

"Καὶ Ἡρώδης τῷ τετράρχῃ τοῦτο δεδηλώκεται. I would here make two remarks upon Celsus mistaking [Herod] King of all Judea, in whose time Jesus was born, for his son, Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee. First, we see the great difficulty of any writer's taking upon himself the character of a more early age than that in which he lives, without committing some great mistakes. This instance may confirm the argument, so much insisted on for the *credibility* of the evangelical history, in the *first part* of this work, where the evangelists' freedom from all errors of this kind was largely shown.—Secondly, since so learned a man as Celsus, about the middle of the second century, has made such a blunder in history, the Christian writers of the same age, or later, ought not to be too severely treated for any mistakes of the like kind."<sup>35</sup>

'The *Editors* of the Improved Version, and *A Calm Inquirer*, may call this "miserable

---

<sup>35</sup> Lardner's Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, 4to edit. Vol. II. p. 289.



sophistry;" but the really candid and calm inquirer after truth will receive it as the sound and correct reasoning of a sensible and learned man. It proves that, whatever his private opinions, he would never have stooped to such contemptible subterfuges as the Editors and their advocate have had recourse to, to prop up the credit of a garbled document, and to impose it on the world, in defiance of all evidence, as the genuine production of an apostle.

The Editors have endeavoured, by the credit of Lardner's name, to fix an anachronism upon the introductory chapters of Matthew and Luke: it is therefore deserving of notice how, in the extract just given from Lardner, that impartial and indefatigable inquirer into the evidences for the Gospel narratives denies them this use of his name, by declaring the evangelists to be free from all errors of this kind, and appeals, for proof of this declaration, to that very work, which is referred to by these Editors, as affording proof that such an error is to be found in the introductory chapters of two of the evangelists. Here Lardner and the Editors are at issue;—which is right, let the reader of this work judge.

Michaelis, as we have seen, supposes the great historical blunder of Celsus to originate in a composition of two different passages of Luke's Gospel; Dr. Nares thinks it is derived from the second

chapter of Matthew.<sup>36</sup> The circumstance that John the Baptist was the son of Zachariah and Elizabeth, must have been derived either directly or indirectly from Luke's Gospel. We may, perhaps, find a solution which will somewhat reduce the magnitude of the blunder which makes John the Baptist preach in the days of Herod, King of Judea. It is not improbable that the writer intended Herod Agrippa, (mentioned in Acts xii.), the son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great. He was certainly living at the commencement of the ministry of John the Baptist, but without any government or title. After the death of Tiberius, Emperor of Rome, Caius Caligula gave him the Tetrarchy of his uncle Philip (who died in the twentieth year of Tiberius), with the title of King; and when Caius deposed and banished Herod Antipas the Tetrarch to Lyons in Gaul, he added Galilee to his dominions: and after the death of Caius, the Emperor Claudius further added Judea and Samaria, so that he possessed the same extent of dominions as his grandfather Herod, with the title of King. This would be an error which even a Jew, acquainted with the history of his nation, who wrote at a period remote from the events recorded, might have fallen into; yet, although it lessens, it does not remove the anachronism, as it was not till about fifteen years after the

---

<sup>36</sup> Nares's Remarks on the Improved Version, 2d edit. p. 5, Note \*.

commencement of the ministry of John the Baptist that Herod Agrippa was King of Judea: it is therefore equally fatal to the authority of the Ebionite document, as if the writer intended, according to the supposition of Michaelis and others, Herod the Great, the son of Antipater.

I have said that the Editors of the Improved Version act in defiance of all evidence, when they represent the Ebionite Gospel to be the genuine Gospel of St. Matthew: that this is true of the Nazarene Gospel, has been already proved; and that it applies even more strongly to the Ebionite Gospel, appears by the awkward attempt to expunge the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel retained in the Nazarene copy, which has produced the historical blunder just noticed, and by the fragments of it preserved by Epiphanius. From the first extract, No. 3, it appears to have been composed in the name of the twelve apostles, which, as it accounts for its being sometimes called *The Gospel according to the Twelve Apostles*, so it proves it to have been a compilation, and not written by Matthew. Again: the additional voice from heaven, in the account it gives of the baptism of Christ—which says, “I have this day begotten thee,”—is unsupported by the other evangelists, Mark and Luke, and appears to have been foisted in for the purpose of supporting the false doctrines of the Cerinthians, who held that Jesus and Christ

were two distinct beings; that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary, that Christ was a superior spirit, or *æon*, who descended on him in the form of a dove at his baptism, and that this union constituted him the Son of God, but that this *æon* was separated from him at his sufferings and death.

“A Calm Inquirer” may, if he please, persist in calling the Gospel used by the Ebionites, the “*purest* copy of the Gospel of Matthew,” “*which they would on no account presume either to enlarge or curtail.*”<sup>37</sup> He may assert this in opposition to the testimony of Cerinthus and Carpocrates,—of the Nazarene Hebrew Gospel,—of the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John. But who will believe him? Not the Editors of the Improved Version, who, though sufficiently favourable to the testimony of the Ebionites, convict them of mutilating that part of the Gospel of Matthew which is now under discussion, and therefore retain as undoubtedly authentic the first sixteen verses of the first chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, though they are not found in the Ebionites’ *purest Gospel of St. Matthew*, which *they would on no account curtail*. Not those who believe the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John to be authentic, and of divine authority. Whom then can *A Calm Inquirer* expect to acquiesce in his confident assertion on the purity and uncorruptness

---

<sup>37</sup> Monthly Repository, for August 1813. Vol. VIII. p. 492.

of the Ebionite Gospel? None but those who implicitly resign their judgment to Unitarian scepticism as the only medium to arrive at truth.<sup>38</sup> We have thus patiently examined all that the Editors of the Improved Version have produced as external evidence against the last nine verses of the first chapter, and the whole of the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and the result will enable the candid reader justly to appreciate its value.

I will now proceed to examine the validity of the external evidence by which the Editors of the Improved Version endeavour to impugn the authenticity of the last seventy-six verses of the first chapter, and the whole of the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke.—“The two first chapters of this Gospel,” say these Editors, “were wanting in the copies used by Marcion, a reputed heretic of the second century; who, though he is represented by his adversaries as holding some extravagant opinions, was a man of learning and

---

<sup>38</sup> *A Calm Inquirer* is angry with Dr. Magee, because he exposes the incongruity of the Editors of the Improved Version, in rejecting or accepting the testimony of the Ebionite Gospel on the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel, as it suits their purpose. He would fain persuade his Unitarian readers, that on this principle we should be unable to believe Livy's relation that Hannibal crossed the Alps, and beat the Romans at Cannæ, unless we also believe that an ox spoke, as related by the same Livy. The learned professor has very ably proved that “the two cases confounded together as similar, are manifestly at direct variance in every point of comparison.” (See Magee's Discourses, &c. on the Atonement, Vol. II. Part II. p. 731—748.)

integrity, for any thing that appears to the contrary. He, like some moderns, rejected all the evangelical histories excepting Luke, of which he contended that his own was a correct and authentic copy."

Marcion flourished about A. D. 130. He taught that the God who created this world, and spoke by Moses and the prophets, was inferior to the Supreme God, and Father of Jesus Christ. The former he called the just and severe God, inconstant and deficient in goodness; the latter he called the good God, the maker of spiritual, invisible, and happy intelligences. That the Devil, who sprung from matter, which he governs, is altogether evil: the eternity of matter was also believed by him. He taught that Jesus Christ, the Son of the supreme and perfectly good God, came into the world to destroy the law and the prophets, and all the works of the Creator of this world, as well as the works of the Devil. That without being born, or gradually growing up to the full stature of a man, Christ shewed himself at once in Galilee as a man grown, not in a real body, but in a certain shadowy resemblance of one. That at his first appearance in this world he was completely qualified to enter on his great work; and that he immediately assumed the character of a Saviour, and was persecuted by the Jews at the instigation of their God, the Creator of the world. But though Marcion

believed Jesus to be the Christ, he did not believe that the Jewish prophecies applied to him, but to a Saviour who was to be a temporal deliverer of the Jewish nation from their enemies. .

These are not all the sentiments peculiar to Marcion, but they suffice to explain his motives for rejecting whole books of the Christian Scriptures, and for mutilating such as he did receive.

Marcion rejected the whole of the Old Testament, both the law and the prophets, as proceeding from the Creator of this world, who was the God of the Jews. The New Testament received by Marcion consisted of an Evangelium, or Gospel, and an Apostolicon. The Evangelium contained only one Gospel, supposed to be compiled chiefly from that of Luke. The Apostolicon consisted of the following ten of the epistles of Paul:—The Epistle to the Galatians, the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Romans, the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Epistle to the Colossians, and that to the Philippians. The variations in Marcion's Apostolicon from our Greek text of the same epistles, and which were numerous, in order to make the text more pliable to his gnostic notions, may be seen in Lardner's 'Jewish and Heathen Testimonies.'

The question which presents itself for our consideration is, whether Marcion's Evangelium was

the Gospel of Luke, only with a more correct text than ours? The Editors of the Improved Version say it was Luke's; "of which," they add, "Marcion contended that his own was a correct and authentic copy." Marcion would, no doubt, contend that his Gospel was the only authentic one (Tertul. Adv. Mar. lib. iv. c. 3); but this does not solve our present question, which is, whether he contended that it was a correct and authentic copy of Luke's Gospel? So far was he from doing this, that he refused to call it the Gospel of Luke (Tertul. Adv. Mar. lib. iv. c. 2). We have here Marcion himself contradicting the assertion of the Editors; and, what may perhaps have yet more weight with these said Editors, this view of Marcion's Evangelium corresponds with Mr. Belsham's corrected opinion of it, as expressed in his Answer to the Bishop of St. David's Brief Memorial, that Marcion "did not pretend to pass off his Evangelium as the Gospel of Luke;" "that Marcion maintains, not that his was a genuine copy of Luke, but a genuine Evangelium."<sup>30</sup>

Enough has been adduced to satisfy every impartial reader, that, whatever doubt may exist with respect to the genuineness of the first two chapters of St. Luke, the Evangelium of Marcion can be of no authority to determine that, or the

---

<sup>30</sup> Appendix to a Discourse, &c., being a Reply to the Bishop of St. David's Memorial, p. 123, and Note.



general accuracy of the text of Luke's Gospel; but as Mr. Belsham still fondly clings to his favourite Marcion as sufficient authority for rejecting as spurious the first two chapters of St. Luke, except the first four verses of the first chapter, we will so far indulge him as to wave, for a moment, Marcion's refusal to acknowledge Luke as the author of the Gospel received by himself, and examine whether Marcion's opinions do not authorise our rejection of *his* Evangelium, as evidence against the integrity of our present copies of Luke's Gospel.

Marcion was so far from believing that Christ was born of a virgin, that he did not admit him to have been born at all; as that would have been to admit that Christ had real flesh and blood, of which he had divested him, as partaking of the evil properties which he ascribed to matter. Consequently, for Christ to be born of a woman, whether virgin or wife, was inconsistent with this part of his system; he therefore began his Gospel thus:—  
 “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, God descended into Capernaum, a city of Galilee,” (Tertul. Adv. Mar. lib. iv. c. 7), connecting the beginning of the third chapter with the thirty-first verse of the fourth chapter of Luke, and omitting what is between, as well as what precedes; that is, besides the first two chapters, the account of John the Baptist, the baptism of Christ, the genealogy, the temptation of Christ, and his visit

to Nazareth. Marcion also omitted part of chaps. viii. 19; x. 21, xi. part of ver. 29, and all of verses 30, 31, 32, 49, 50, 51; xii. 6, 28, part of 8, 30, 32; xiii. the first five verses; altered the 28th, and omitted from the 29th to the end of the chapter: xv. from ver. 11 to 32; xvii. part of verses 10, 12, the whole of ver. 13; the whole of xviii. 31, 32, 33; xix. 28 to 46 inclusive; xx. from 9 to 18 inclusive, also the 37th and 38th verses; xxi. 18, 21, 22; xxii. 16, 35, 36, 37, 50, 51; xxiii. 43; xxiv. 26, 27, and the 25th verse altered:<sup>40</sup> besides some minor variations and additions. Whether we have an account of all the variations of Marcion's Evangelium from Luke's Gospel, we have not, at this day, the means of determining.

The Gospel of Luke was probably the basis of Marcion's Evangelium. His variations from the Gospel of Luke were intended, as will appear upon examination, to make it more conformable to his own opinions, that the God of the Jews was not the father of Christ; that the Jewish prophets did not foretel his advent; that Christ was not born of a woman, and so did not partake of flesh and blood, but was man in appearance only: yet Mr. Belsham gravely asserts, that "there was nothing in his system, that we know of, which was inconsistent with the history of the miraculous conception."<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> See Lardner's History of Heretics, p. 198—263.

<sup>41</sup> Letters upon Arianism, &c. p. 71.

Whatever may be said as to the sincerity of Marcion's belief of the opinions which he propagated, his unacknowledged plagiarism of Luke's Gospel does not reflect much credit on his mode of supporting them. If it be urged in his defence, that the supposed similarity between Marcion's Gospel and that of Luke is not a decisive proof that his Gospel was copied from it, our opponents are at liberty to adopt this improbable supposition, in order to save the credit of their favourite Marcion; but then, if the Gospel used by Marcion was not a copy of Luke's, we must no more be told that "upon the whole there is no reason to believe that the account of the miraculous conception was found in that copy of Luke's Gospel which Marcion used."<sup>42</sup>

If any of the passages in Luke's Gospel, which are omitted in that used by Marcion, are unfavourable to his system, we have the authority of Mr. Belsham for denying that such omissions can impeach those passages in our copies of Luke. As to other omissions, since Marcion does not acknowledge Luke as the author of his Evangelium, they no more invalidate the passages omitted, than similar omissions in the other three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John.

But after all, notwithstanding their appeal to the evidence of Marcion, the Editors shew no

---

<sup>42</sup> Appendix to a Discourse, &c. p. 128.

great respect for it. They retain, in opposition to it, the first four verses of the first chapter of Luke, in which verses there is nothing inimical to Marcion's opinions. Equal disregard have they evinced to his evidence in other parts of their version of Luke's Gospel; for with one only exception, where Marcion's omission favoured their own opinions, they have not once corrected the text of our copy of Luke by him, notwithstanding his numerous variations already noticed, which proves, if any proof were necessary, that Marcion has been brought forward, on the present occasion, not because the Editors wanted critical acumen to discover the inefficiency of Marcion's evidence to correct our text of Luke, but because, in the absence of better evidence, they could not dispense with that of Marcion.

Here closes my review of the external evidence advanced by the Unitarian against the genuineness and authenticity of the introductory chapters of Matthew and Luke's Gospels. Low indeed must that biblical critic rank, who can gravely attempt to impugn the united evidence of all the MSS., versions, and fathers, by such worthless documents as the Ebionite Hebrew Gospel and Marcion's Evangelium. Though we may regret that men professing to be ministers of Christ, and to propagate the glad tidings of the Gospel, should mislead their flocks, who are looking up to them as guides to direct them in the way which leads to eternal

life; yet it is some consolation to know, that all such perverted labours, by eliciting further research, will ultimately only confirm the authenticity and integrity of the present Greek text of the New Testament in all material points, and consequently establish our confidence in the Holy Scriptures, as an authentic revelation from God to man.

## CHAP. IV.

*The Argument of the Editors from Epiphanius's Account of Cerinthus and Carpocrates, that the First Sixteen Verses of the First Chapter of St. Matthew are genuine, examined—Their Assertion that these First Sixteen Verses contradict the remainder of the First Chapter controverted—The Propriety of Christ's Descent being traced through Joseph as well as through Mary, the Evangelical Accounts of the Miraculous Conception and of the Birth of Christ consistent with his Descent, both legal and natural, from David—with the Jewish Prophecies—Unitarian Objections examined.*

IN the last chapter was examined what may be called the external evidence, advanced by the Editors of the Improved Version, against the narrative of the miraculous conception. I shall next proceed to investigate what may be called the internal evidence adduced by the Editors against these narratives.

The genealogy, in the first chapter of Matthew, is adduced, as being of itself conclusive evidence against the genuineness of the remainder of the first, and the whole of the second chapter of Matthew. The Editors shall speak for themselves. In their note on Matt. i. 1, they say:—  
 “ Epiphanius says that Cerinthus and Carpocrates,

who used the Gospel of the Ebionites, which was probably the original Gospel of Matthew, written in the Hebrew language for the use of the Jewish believers, argued from the genealogy at the beginning of the Gospel, that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary; but that the Ebionites had taken away even the genealogy, beginning their Gospel with these words: 'And it came to pass in the days of Herod the king,' &c. (*See* Epiph. Hæres. 30, No. 13. Jones on the Canon, Vol. I. Part. II. c. 25). It is probable, therefore, that the first sixteen verses of this chapter are genuine, and that they were found at least in the copies of Cerinthus and Carpocrates. And, indeed, it can hardly be supposed, that an author, writing for the instruction of Hebrew Christians, would have omitted the descent of Christ from Abraham and David, upon which they justly laid so great a stress. Archbishop Newcome adds the names in verse 8, from 1 Chron. iii. 11, 12; and he suspects verse 17 to have been a marginal note anciently taken into the text. *See* the Annotations to his Harmony, §. 9. The eighteenth verse begins a new story, which continues to the end of the second chapter. This could not have been written by the author of the genealogy, for it contradicts his design, which was to prove that Jesus, being the son of Joseph, was the descendant of Abraham and David; whereas the design of this narrative is to show that Joseph, the reputed

father of Jesus, was not his real father. This account, therefore, of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, must have been wanting in the copies of Cerinthus and Carpocrates, as well as in those of the Ebionites; and if the genealogy be genuine, this narrative must be spurious."

Here is criticism, which sets at defiance the theological labours of the Michaelises and the Lardners: it arrives at its results by a much shorter and less laborious method; it cuts the knot which it cannot untie. When evidence in favour of the received canon of the New Testament is investigated, nothing can exceed the scepticism of the Unitarian critic; but the foregoing chapter, and the passage just quoted, proves that nothing can exceed his credulity, when he is searching for evidence to invalidate it. There is no contradiction which he will not reconcile, no absurdity which he will not embrace and adhere to, in opposition to the clearest evidence. Indeed, so averse is the Unitarian to fair rational discussion, that the more cogent and incontrovertible the argument by which he is opposed, the more likely is it to receive either no answer at all, or to be met by sophistry and abuse only in return.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> A comparative view of Dr. Magee's *Animadversions* on the Improved Version, in the two last editions of his work on the Atonement, with Mr. Belsham's Answer to it, published first in the *Monthly Repository*, and since at the end of his work, entitled, "*The Bampton Lecturer Reproved*," presents a fair illustration of the Unitarian mode of returning abuse for argument.



The Editors of the Improved Version admit the genuineness of the first sixteen verses in the first chapter of Matthew; but so averse are they to legitimate evidence, for what they do receive of the first two chapters, that the only evidence to which they appeal for retaining the genealogy, is what Epiphanius, a writer of the latter end of the fourth century, says, respecting Cerinthus and Carpocrates. Their reason for preferring such remote and circuitous evidence, when that which was good and direct lay before them, was, we may presume, because this latter evidence is equally in favour of the genuineness of the remainder of the first two chapters, which they reject as spurious: so far they are consistent. They appear, however, somewhat conscious of the deficiency of this evidence of Epiphanius, and therefore attempt to support it by conjectures of their own; but here, unfortunately, they are deserted by their favourite Ebionites, "their ancient Hebrew Christians;" but, nothing discouraged, they accuse the latter of taking away the genealogy. We shall not dispute with them the truth of this accusation; but this accusation, instead of diminishing, increases the embarrassment of the Editors with their Ebionite friends, whose *purest copy* of the Gospel of Matthew, which *they would, on no account, curtail*, did not contain the genealogy; for these *Hebrew Christians*, who, according to these Editors, "justly laid so great a stress" on "the descent of Christ from Abraham and David," must have had

some motive for taking away a genealogy which traces this descent. The truth appears to be, that Matthew has so connected the genealogy with the succeeding narrative, that the Ebionites, in mutilating the Gospel of Matthew, thought it safer and more consistent to suppress the whole of this part, than to retain the genealogy, and reject the subsequent narrative; and the Ebionites were better qualified than their modern friends, the Editors of the Improved Version, to determine whether it consisted with their views, to retain in or leave out of their Gospel, the genealogy of Matthew. Neither do these Editors retain their own opinion as to the inconsistency of the genealogy with the subsequent narrative, any longer than they find it convenient, as an argument, to prove that this narrative could not be in the copies of the Ebionite Gospel, used by Cerinthus and Carpocrates; for, in the next note, they say, "The account of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ could not have been unacceptable to the ancient Hebrew Christians, if it had been found in the genuine narrative. Nor would it at all have militated against the doctrine of the proper humanity of Christ,—it being a fact analogous to the miraculous birth of Isaac, Samuel, and other eminent persons of the Hebrew nation."

There is no evidence that the Gospel, used by Cerinthus and Carpocrates, did not contain the whole of the first two chapters of Matthew; the

only reason assigned by the Editors, why it could not, is, because it contained the genealogy; "this account therefore," say they, "of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, must have been wanting in the copies of Cerinthus and Carpocrates." This luminous argument cannot be better illustrated, than by a reference to all the Greek manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel, to which I shall add what Lardner says of the Cerinthians. "It may be questioned, whether the opinion of the Cerinthians be rightly represented. If they received the genealogy in Matthew, as he [Epiphanius] says they did, they might argue that Jesus was truly a man, but must allow that he was born of a virgin."<sup>2</sup>

From this passage it appears, that Lardner doubted the accuracy of Epiphanius's account of the Cerinthians. Of this same Epiphanius, Mr. Belsham says, "that the opinion of so credulous a writer is not worth a straw;" but such was not the sentiment of the candid and learned Lardner, though he did not implicitly receive all that he found in the works of Epiphanius; and it is rather remarkable that Mr. Belsham should have expressed himself in terms of such severe reprehension of a writer, to whom he and his fellow Editors are indebted for most, if not all, of their external evidence against the genuineness of the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel.

---

<sup>2</sup> Lardner's History of Heretics, 4to edit. p. 151.

But this narrative of the miraculous conception "could not have been written by the author of the genealogy, because it contradicts his design." Are these Unitarian Editors sure that their zeal for their own system has not induced them to attribute to the author of the genealogy, what, in their opinion, his design ought to have been, rather than what it really was? If the author of the genealogy was other than the author of the narrative, and wrote with an opposite design, he would not, when he came to Joseph, have made a sudden transition from his uniform mode of expression. The genealogy gives the natural line of descent from Abraham, through David to Joseph, and therefore uses ἐγέννησε, *begat*, in each instance, even when the mothers, on account of something peculiar in their history, are mentioned; but when it comes to Jacob, the father of Joseph, instead of saying Jacob begat Joseph, and Joseph begat Jesus of Mary, it says, "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ;" or, in other words, though he was born of Mary, he was not begotten by Joseph her husband. The subsequent narrative says the same. But the Editors having, as we have before observed, in page 2 of the Improved Version, contradicted the charge of inconsistency between the genealogy and the miraculous conception, made by the said Editors in page 1, we may very safely take leave of the argument, and leave

them to reconcile, as they can, their own inconsistencies.<sup>3</sup>

Having disposed of the charge of inconsistency, we will next consider the propriety of Matthew's tracing the genealogy of Christ through Joseph, his reputed father. It was conformable to the Jewish custom (unless we except the case of heiresses), "to trace the pedigree through the husband of the mother." And if, as the Editors of the Improved Version inform us, the miraculous conception was "a fact analogous to the miraculous birth of Isaac, Samuel, and other eminent persons of the Hebrew nation," no reason appears why this custom should be departed from in tracing the pedigree of Christ.

Agreeably to all English as well as Jewish custom, Jesus must be considered as the legitimate son of Joseph, Mary his mother being a virgin when she was married to Joseph, and Jesus born of her after the said marriage. There was no law which could take any cognizance of the miraculous nature of her conception, and therefore none that could consider Jesus other than as the son of Joseph. If Mary had been married to a

---

<sup>3</sup> For it could not with truth be said of the early Hebrew Christians, that to them "the account of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ could not have been unacceptable, if it had been found in the genuine narrative," if there were an inconsistency between it and the genealogical table which precedes it. This argument for the consistency of the miraculous conception with the Jewish expectations of the Messiah is also urged in the *Monthly Repository* for August 1809, Vol. IV. p. 421.

Levite, although Jesus would then, through his mother, have been equally and exclusively descended from David, his *legal* descent from David and claim to his throne would have been destroyed by such an alliance, which would have constituted him of the tribe of Levi, instead of that of Judah.

So far then as our Saviour's legal claims to the throne of David through Joseph, as his legitimate heir, are concerned, the analogy drawn by the Editors between the birth of Christ, and the birth of Isaac and Samuel, will apply, but no further. Isaac and Samuel were really begotten by their fathers Abraham and Elkanah, whereas Jesus was not begotten by Joseph, or any human father. Hence, clear as it is that, according to the Jewish law and custom, Jesus must be considered as the legitimate son of Joseph, and must as such inherit all his rights to the throne of David; yet, as the prophecies concerning Messiah required that he should be really descended from David, which descent could only be traced through his virgin mother, it was necessary that we should have Christ's pedigree traced through his maternal branch of the genealogical tree to David: that this branch should be given by one of the Evangelists is therefore only what the peculiar circumstances, attending the conception and birth of Christ, seemed to require.

That Luke does not give the natural pedigree of Joseph, is indisputably evident from the genealogical

table in Matthew; the question then is, In what sense is Joseph called the son of Heli? Archbishop Newcome is of opinion that Luke gives the genealogy of Mary, and that "Joseph, being nearest of kin to Mary, the daughter and sole child of Heli, married her, and had a right to the inheritance of Heli, his father-in-law. Joseph is therefore styled the son of Heli in the Jewish latitude of the word." (See his Note on Matt. i. 17). The only objection that can, with any plausibility, be made to this explanation, is the omission of Mary's name in the genealogy. Dr. Adam Clarke's Note on Luke i. 23, not only meets this objection, but otherwise throws considerable light on this subject. I shall cite so much of it as bears on the point before us.

"St. Matthew," says Dr. Clarke, "in descending from Abraham to Joseph, the spouse of the blessed Virgin, speaks of *sons*, properly such, by way of natural generation. *Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, &c.* But St. Luke, in ascending from the Saviour of the world to God himself, speaks of *sons* either properly or improperly such: on this account he uses an indeterminate mode of expression, which may be applied to sons either *putatively* or *really* such. *And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being as was supposed the son of Joseph, — of Heli, — of Matthat, &c.* This receives considerable support from Raphelius's method of reading the original,

ὡς ἐνομίζετο υἱὸς Ἰωσήφ) τοῦ Ἠλὶ, being (when reputed the son of Joseph) the son of Heli, &c. That St. Luke does not always speak of sons *properly* such, is evident from the first and last person which he names: Jesus Christ was only the *supposed* son of Joseph, because Joseph was the husband of his mother Mary; and Adam, who is said to be the *son of God*, was only such by way of *creation*. After this observation, it is next necessary to consider, that in the genealogy described by St. Luke, there are two sons *improperly* such; i. e. two *sons-in-law* instead of two sons. As the Hebrews never permitted women to enter into their genealogical tables, whenever a family happened to end in a *daughter*, instead of naming *her* in the genealogy, they mentioned her *husband* as the *son* of him who was in reality but his *father-in-law*. This import Bishop Pearce has fully proved νομίζεσθαι bears in a variety of places. Jesus was *considered* according to law, or *allowed custom*, to be the son of Joseph, as he was of Heli. The two sons-in-law, who are to be noticed in this genealogy, are *Joseph*, the son-in-law of *Heli*, whose own father was *Jacob* (Matt. i. 16), and *Salathiel*, the son-in-law of *Neri*, whose own father was *Jechomias* (1 Chron. iii. 17. Matt. i. 12). This remark alone is sufficient to remove every difficulty. Thus it appears that Joseph, *son of Jacob*, according to St. Matthew (chap. i. 16), was *son-in-law* of Heli, according to St. Luke



(chap. iii. 23.) And *Salathiel*, son of *Jeckonias*, according to the former (ver. 12), was *son-in-law* of *Neri*, according to the latter (ver. 27). Mary therefore appears to have been the daughter of *Heli*, so called by abbreviation for *Heliachim*, which is the same in the Hebrew with *Joachim*. Joseph, son of Jacob, and Mary the daughter of Heli, were of the *same* family—both came from Zorobabel; Joseph from Abiud, his eldest son (Matt. i. 13), and Mary by Rhesa, the youngest (Luke iii. 27). Salathiel and Zorobabel, from whom St. Matthew and St. Luke cause Christ to proceed, were themselves descended from Solomon in a direct line; and though St. Luke says that Salathiel was the *son of Neri*, who was descended from *Nathan*, Solomon's eldest brother (1 Chron. iii. 5), this is only to be understood of his having espoused *Nathan's daughter*; and that Neri dying, probably without male issue, the two branches of the family of David, that of *Nathan* and that of *Solomon*, were both united in *Zorobabel*, by the marriage of *Salathiel*, chief of the regal family of Solomon, with the daughter of *Neri*, chief and heretrix of the family of *Nathan*. Thus it appears that Jesus, son of Mary, reunited in himself all the blood, privileges, and rights of the whole family of David, in consequence of which he is emphatically called *The Son of David*."

Dr. Barrett, in his *Prolegomena to the Codex Rescriptus*, containing part of Matthew's Gospel

already adverted to in a former part of this work, has given an elaborate and able disquisition on the genealogies given by Matthew and Luke, to which the learned are referred. Those who cannot have access to Dr. Barrett's work, may see an analysis of his arguments in Dr. Adam Clarke's Note on Luke i. 23, or in the Eclectic Review, Vol. III. beginning p. 193, and continued at intervals to p. 698. "According to the universal voice of antiquity," says Dr. A. Clarke, "the father and mother of the Virgin were called *Joachim* and *Anna*. Dr. Barrett thinks it indisputable that Joachim is the same name with Eli (Luke iii. 23), or Eliakim (2 Chron. xxxvi. 4). To give a greater probability to the opinion that Luke delivers the genealogy of *Mary*, Dr. B. refers to those Jewish writings quoted by Lightfoot, in which the mother of our Lord is called מרים בת עלי, *Mary, the daughter of Eli*; and though the latter word is written עלי instead of אלי, this does not, in his opinion, tend to invalidate the argument, as א and ע are frequently interchanged. It may therefore be taken for granted that Eli was the father of Mary, and maternal grandfather of Christ; and that he is considered by St. Luke as the real father of Christ, while Joseph is only the putative father; and thus Dr. B. thinks his own exposition is not only confirmed, but Luke is represented to be consistent with himself through the whole of his account; for in the same way as

Neri is said to be the father of Salathiel, though it is evident he was no more than his maternal grandfather; so Eli would appear to be the maternal grandfather of Christ, although he is called his father. On the contrary, if the hypothesis of Africanus be adopted, the genealogy by St. Luke is self-contradictory."<sup>4</sup>

If the arguments of Dr. Adam Clarke and Dr. Barrett do not afford absolute certainty that

<sup>4</sup> The hypothesis of Africanus, advanced in his letter to Aristides, is unsupported by the text, and is inconsistent with the law of Levitation; for that law requires that the husband's brother (as being of the same family and tribe) shall marry the deceased's wife, and raise up seed to his brother (See Deut. xxx. 5); and this must be understood of the brother by the same father; whereas Africanus's hypothesis makes *Jacob* and *Heli* brethren only by the same mother, but begotten by different fathers. Other parts of this letter of Africanus appear to be contradictory to the histories of the times; so that the letter itself is little to be depended on as evidence to settle a controverted point; whereas the explanation which supposes Luke to give the genealogy of Mary, as heiress and sole child of Heli, is quite consistent with the genealogy itself, accounts for its being in a different line from that in Matthew, and is supported by the ancient Jewish traditions of the Virgin Mary's progenitors. Of Dr. Barrett's attempt to solve the difficulties supposed to be attendant on the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, Dr. A. Clarke says, "It cannot be objected against his argument, that he takes for granted what he should have proved; viz. that one or other of the genealogies is true. This he has not asserted; but he infers that both are authentic, from their agreement with that which he has constructed from the best existing authorities: and although he considers the hypothesis of the moderns, which states that Luke sets down the genealogy of Mary, to be the most probable, yet he has not assumed it as true; neither do his conclusions against the hypothesis of Africanus in the second and third sections rest on any such assumption, but solely on the authority of the Old Testament, and a collation of MSS. unconnected with any hypothesis whatever."

St. Luke gives the genealogy of the Virgin Mary, they not only completely obviate the objections to this opinion, but present a more consistent view of the design of Luke's genealogy than any other explanation of it.

The next objection I shall consider, is nearly allied to the last;—it is in the Note on Luke i. 4, and thus expressed: “ If the account of the miraculous conception of Jesus be true, he could not be the offspring of David and of Abraham, from whom it was predicted, and by the Jews expected, that the Messiah should descend.”

Do these Editors suppose that we shall accept confident unsupported assertion for sound reasoning? They say, *If the ACCOUNT of the miraculous conception of Jesus BE TRUE, he could not be the offspring of David.* They could not have well considered their premises, when they drew such a conclusion: for, if the ACCOUNT of the miraculous conception BE TRUE, we have it from the highest authority, that Jesus was the offspring of David,—even that of God himself, who must have known whether the miraculous event, of which he was the author, prevented Christ from being the seed of David. See *the account* in Luke i. 26—38.

Here we might take leave of this objection of the Editors, as having received its complete confutation; but other Unitarian writers having objected to the truth of the miraculous conception, that the Virgin Mary's descent from David would not prove

Christ's descent from David, because "the genealogies among the Jews were reckoned in the male line only<sup>5</sup>," we will consider the validity of this plea. It relates rather to the customs of the Jews, than to matter of fact; and as such, has been already in part answered, where it was shewn, that, according to the said customs, Jesus was the legitimate son of Joseph, and as such, heir to his rights and privileges. But from the genealogical table in Luke, it appears, that it would have been more correct to have said, that the Jews did not introduce the names of females in the line of descent in their genealogical tables, than to say that they "traced descent in the male line only." As Salathiel's own father was Jechonias, he could be son to Neri only through the female line of Nathan's family: this branch of the house of David was therefore continued from *Neri*, through the *female* line, under the name of *Salathiel* to *Heli*. Joseph's own father was Jacob; he was only the son of Heli or Joachim, through his marriage with Mary, the daughter of Heli: thus from *Heli*,

---

<sup>5</sup> "This is a mistake; (1 Chron. ii. 22), Jair is reckoned among the posterity of Judah. But because the grandfather of Jair (ver. 21,) had married the daughter of Machir, of a noble house, in the tribe of Manasseh, (Ib. vii. 14,) therefore the same Jair is called (Num. xxxii. 41) the son of Manasseh. So also, (Ezra ii. 61) we find a family, entitled the children of Barzillai, because one of their ancestors took a wife of Barzillai the Gileadite." *Townson*. See English Harmony of the Four Evangelists, after the manner of the Greek of Newcome. Note on Matt. i. Luke iii. p. 436.

this branch again falls into the *female* line, under the name of *Joseph*. These lapses into the female line, must have been occasioned by default of male issue, and prove that, in default of male issue, if there were female issue, in their offspring the lineage was preserved, the name of the son-in-law or grandson being entered into the genealogical table, instead of the daughter, though it was through the latter only, in strictness, that the lineage of such a family did not become extinct.

It has been objected, that Christ could not be the Messiah, predicted by the prophets, if he were miraculously conceived. 1st, Because he could not, through his mother only, be a natural descendant of Abraham and David. 2d, Because in such case he could not be "exactly such a person as the prophets had foretold." The first of these objections has been disproved by the preceding observations on the genealogical tables in Matthew and Luke:—the second will vanish at the first attack. The first prophecy of Christ is generally acknowledged to be in Gen. iii. 15, where it is promised, that the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. In Isai. vii. 14, we read, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." Again, in Jerem. xxxi. 22, "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth; a woman shall compass a man." From the very nature of prophecy, it is more or less involved in obscurity, until the fulfilment reflects light on the prediction. Such is the case

with the prophecies just enumerated: they advert to an event miraculous, and out of the usual course of nature. The evangelical accounts of the miraculous conception and birth of Christ, display the literal fulfilment of them: they inform us that the Messiah was the seed of the woman, without the intervention of man—that he was the son of a virgin, that then God did create a new thing in the earth, by enabling a woman to produce a man; for such was Christ, not in appearance only, as Marcion and the Gnostics maintained, but in reality liable to sufferings and death, as were Moses and the prophets before him; and thus were those prophecies fulfilled, which describe the Messiah as a man liable to suffering and death.

Christ is also described, in the page of prophecy, as partaking of a nature superhuman, as possessing attributes and powers peculiar to the Deity:—for example, Psalm xlv. 6, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre: thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Ibid. cx. 1, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Isai. vii. 14, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name IMMANUEL.” Ibid. ix. 6, 7, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and

his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, **THE MIGHTY GOD**, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever." Jerem. xxiii. 5, 6, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**." Mic. v. 2, "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Zech. xiii. 7, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." And lastly, Malachi iii. 1, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple."

However incorrect the notions which the Jews had formed of the person and character of the Messiah, from such prophecies as the foregoing,



they probably understood them to imply a mysterious origin of the Messiah; hence their objection to acknowledging Jesus to be the Christ, as expressed in John vii. 26, 27, "Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is." And also in Matt. xiii. 54, 55, "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?"

But little importance, however, can attach to the manner in which the unbelieving Jews interpreted the prophecies respecting Christ; for, whether Jesus was considered to be the son of Joseph and Mary, strictly and properly such, which appears to have been the case during his ministry, or whether, as after his resurrection, he was represented as miraculously born of a virgin; on either supposition, they did not want an excuse for rejecting the Christ of God.

We will now turn to the specific objections, which are urged by the Unitarians, from the prophecies: they say, "When God sware unto David, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne (see Acts ii. 30), David could not understand otherwise, than that Christ should be one of his natural and legitimate descendants; the fruit of his loins must mean one of his posterity, and according to the flesh,

according to natural generation." It is impossible to prove how this promise was understood by David, neither is it important: we have already seen how Jesus was of the seed of David, through his mother, and his legitimate descendant and heir to his throne, through his reputed father, Joseph. The proper meaning of the phrase, *according to the flesh*, may be seen by the antithesis, used by the apostle Paul, Rom. i. 3, 4, which text, with the Editors' note on it, will be considered in its proper place.

Again, "When Moses said, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me,' the people would certainly understand him to mean, a man conceived and born in the same way as other men, who should be as much one of their brethren, as any other man of Israel<sup>6</sup>." Whether the Jews so understood this prophecy respecting the Messiah, is more, I believe, than can be proved from Jewish writers, previous to the coming of Christ; if it could, it would only prove, what facts have sufficiently proved, that the Jews did not understand their own prophecies, or they would not have rejected the Messiah when he came: but that the Jews so understood this prophecy, has, I think, been already disproved by John vii. 27: and

---

<sup>6</sup> Wright on the Miraculous Conception, p. 17.

further, in John xii. 34, the Jews say, " We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest thou, the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

As the Son of Man, liable to sufferings and death, Jesus answers the description of the Messiah in the above prophecy of Moses. As the Son of God, he answers the prophetic description given of him by Moses in Gen. iii. 15, by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Zechariah, and Malachi. As the Son of God, he was superior to Moses; this superiority is pointed out in Heb. iii. 1—6: " Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful, in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things, is God. And Moses, verily, was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ, as a son over his own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." In this passage, the appellation of Son is applied to Christ, in a sense not appropriate to Moses, or to any other human being.

Thus, whether, with Marcion and the ancient Gnostics, we consider Christ to be only a man in appearance; or whether, with the Unitarians, we consider him as a mere peccable man, with no superiority in his nature above the prophets that had preceded him; neither of these views accord with the language of prophecy.

## CHAP. V.

*The Date of the Commencement of Christ's ministry in Luke iii. 1, presents no valid Objection to the Genuineness of the Introductory Chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke—Josephus, and not Luke, the Authority upon which the Editors of the Improved Version found their Objection—Examination of the Testimony of Josephus—his Works contain greater Chronological Errors than that urged by the Unitarian against the Narratives of the Miraculous Conception—The Data of Josephus reconciled with these Narratives, by the Fact of the joint Empire of Tiberius with Augustus—Vindication of Lardner's Proofs of this joint Empire against the Objections of Mr. Belsham—On the Date of Enrolment, Luke ii. 1, 2, the principal Difficulty attending it removed, by the Editors' Adoption of Lardner's Version of the Passage.*

THE next subject which presents itself for our consideration, is a chronological difficulty, which the Editors of the Improved Version pronounce sufficient of itself to "invalidate the whole story" of the miraculous conception and birth of Christ, recorded in the introductory chapters to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

The difficulty is thus stated by them:—"The evangelist [Luke] expressly affirms that Jesus had completed his thirtieth year in the fifteenth year

of Tiberius Cæsar (chap. iii. 1, 23.) He must, therefore, have been born fifteen years before the death of Augustus, A. U. C. 752 or 753: but the latest period assigned for the death of Herod is the spring of A. U. C. 751; and he died, probably, the year before. See Lardner's Works, Vol. I. p. 423—428; and Jones's Development of Facts, Vol. I. p. 365—368. Herod therefore must have been dead upwards of two years before Christ was born: a fact which invalidates the whole narration."

Persons the least conversant with history cannot be unacquainted with the difficulties which almost invariably attend the chronology of events in ancient history; of events, the truth of which is not questioned. But let us for the present grant the Editors the chronological error they labour to establish, and consider whether this is "a circumstance which invalidates the whole story." It may be, I think, safely affirmed that this is a conclusion which they would not have drawn from a similar error, in any other ancient history. For which would be the most probable solution of the difficulty,—to suppose that, through the carelessness of transcribers, γ' had been omitted after λ', (or τρεῖς omitted after τριάρχοντα,) in Luke iii. 23, or to suppose the whole narrative to be a forgery, the substance of which is to be found in two authors, who have evidently not written in concert? and both their narratives correspond with other histories of the same period, and contain internal

marks of authenticity. Now, of these two suppositions, does not the adoption of the latter by the Editors evince a predetermination, at all events, to get rid of a narrative which presents an obstacle to a favourite hypothesis? especially when it is adopted by those who have, on another occasion, shown such a plenitude of faith, as to receive, for the genuine Hebrew copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew, a notorious forgery, notwithstanding the egregious mistake in the said forgery of *Herod King of Judea*, instead of *Herod Tetrarch of Galilee*; an error more egregious, and less likely to proceed from a slip of the pen in transcribing, than the error which they think that they detect in Luke iii. 1, 23.

Such versatility of criticism proves that, as in the days of our Saviour's sojourn on earth, so, in the present day, there are those who can strain at gnats, and swallow camels;—it proves the facility with which the Unitarian can diversify his criticism, as he happens to be predisposed to receive or reject a record—how he can expand or contract his faith to suit the occasion. Had the advocates for the authenticity of these narratives disgraced themselves by such criticism, their Unitarian opponents would not have failed to treat it with the contempt it merited; they would have observed, that if no ancient historians are to be credited, till the difficulties attending the chronology of the events they record were removed, we must reject the most valuable and authentic ancient records.

These strictures are designed to expose, admitting the full force of the chronological difficulty urged by the Editors, the insufficient grounds upon which an Unitarian would expunge, from the Sacred Records, such portions of them as do not comport with his views. But, in point of fact, far from admitting the force of this chronological objection, it is intended to prove, in the following pages, that the narrative of Luke is perfectly correct, and consistent with other histories of that period.

Before I proceed to examine the grounds of the objection, I shall quote what Mr. Belsham has said elsewhere on this subject:—"From Luke it appears, that Christ was born only fifteen years before the death of Augustus; and Dr. Lardner has proved, to the satisfaction of all scholars, that Herod died seventeen or eighteen years before that emperor, and consequently Herod must have died before Christ was born. My friend [Mr. Carpenter] parries this argument, by asserting that 'it is no easy matter to ascertain the time of Herod's death, or the commencement of the reign of Tiberius.' But he ought to know, that as to the time of Herod's death there is little or no difference of opinion amongst the learned. And whatever my friend, or even Dr. Lardner himself, may *suppose*, to help out an hypothesis, there is not the least difficulty in the world in ascertaining the date of Tiberius's accession. So far from regarding himself as colleague with Augustus in the empire, and his



natural and undoubted successor, he pretended great reluctance at assuming the title after that prince's death. He was even suspicious that Germanicus might be preferred before him; and he would not assume the imperial dignity till it was forced upon him by the unanimous voice of the obsequious senate. My friend may, if he pleases, read the account of the dissimulation practised by the subtle prince upon this critical occasion, in the first book of Tacitus's Annals. And as to the practice of giving a double date to the reign of an emperor, it was never heard of till the times of the lower empire, long after the period of which we are speaking. So that what Dr. Lardner *supposes*, cannot invalidate and set aside what Dr. Lardner has *proved*. The fact is, that it never occurred to that learned writer that the prefaces to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke might be spurious; and therefore he has proposed hypotheses the most improbable in themselves, though perhaps the best which the case admitted, in order to reconcile these supposed histories to established facts."<sup>1</sup>

In this passage, Mr. Belsham attempts something like an argumentative answer to Lardner's

---

<sup>1</sup> Monthly Repository, Vol. III. p. 361. Some notice is taken of the two-fold commencement and computation of Tiberius's reign, in answer to the Quarterly Review, in the Monthly Repository, Vol. IV. pp. 423, 424, in which it is called, "a mere gratuitous supposition." A very little investigation will prove which party is most prone to *gratuitous suppositions*,—Lardner, or his opponents.

elaborate disquisition on the *objection against the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, compared with the age of Jesus at his baptism*. We shall soon see which are most to be depended on, Lardner's *suppositions*, as Mr. Belsham calls them, or Mr. Belsham's *proofs*. The fact, that it never occurred to such an impartial and laborious investigator of historical evidence as Lardner, that the two first chapters of Matthew and Luke might be spurious, affords a strong presumption in favour of their authenticity. Lardner pursued his inquiry into the credibility of the Gospel history with that freedom from prejudice which qualifies for such inquiries: he did not presuppose the spuriousness of any part of Gospel history, and then ransack for evidence to justify his predetermination. The deliberate conclusions of a most learned and laborious divine, confessedly not prejudiced against the Socinian scheme, will be of far greater weight with the candid inquirer, than the minute objections of Mr. Belsham and his school.

From the manner in which the Editors state their chronological objection, the reader would suppose that they reject, upon the authority of Luke himself, the first two chapters, as not written by him;<sup>2</sup> and this is, I believe, the

---

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Belsham, in his *Letters on Arianism*, p. 71, asserts the same thing. His words are:—" 'The first chapter of Luke,' says my friend (p. 118), 'is rejected *merely* on the authority of Marcion.' This is not true. I have already shewn that both the first and the

impression they intend to make on the reader's mind, but it is only calculated to mislead. It is from the date assigned for the death of Herod, that the Editors object to the age assigned by Luke to Jesus in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, as inconsistent with the account, in Matthew, of his birth before the death of Herod. I say *in Matthew*, because there is nothing in Luke that necessarily fixes the birth of Jesus before the death of Herod, neither is there any thing in Luke to fix the period of the latter event: the Editors must therefore have travelled out of the record of Luke to discover any inconsistency between the period assigned for the birth of Jesus in the first chapters of Matthew and Luke, with the age of Jesus at his baptism, mentioned by Luke. Josephus is the only author from whom any probable conjecture can be formed of the time when Herod the Great died. I say *conjecture*, for however probable it may be that Lardner's calculations approach near to the truth, they do not amount to certainty. This uncertainty, occasioned by a want

---

second chapters are rejected upon much higher authority—the testimony of Luke himself.” The same thing is reiterated in the *Answer to the Quarterly Review* (Month. Repos. Vol. IV. p. 424.) Mr. Belsham must know better. He must know that the data upon which he founds his chronological objection to the genuineness of the narratives of the miraculous conception, he derives from Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*, and not from Luke's Gospel. Whether his data justify his objection, is another and distinct consideration. The passage in Josephus, which occasions the chronological difficulty urged by the Editors and Mr. Belsham, is in his *Antiq.* Book XVII. chap. vi. §. 4.

of sufficient data in Josephus, is acknowledged by Lardner, and urged by him as an argument on the present occasion. "It is no disparagement," says he, "to the sacred historians, that we are somewhat at a loss to settle precisely the very year of some of those events which they have related. Many important facts related by the best historians are attended with chronological difficulties."<sup>3</sup>

Josephus is a valuable historian, and perhaps as accurate as most who have written of the same period; but when his single testimony is adduced to impugn, as spurious, whole chapters from the Sacred Records, we must be allowed to pause, and to submit his accuracy, as an historian and chronologer, to a more rigid scrutiny, than would otherwise be necessary, before we can admit his single evidence as sufficient to authorise such serious results.

There are important variations in the relation of events, and in chronology, between Josephus and the Old Testament; but who would produce the testimony of the former, to impugn the authenticity of the latter? But to come nearer to the period, when the events of which we are writing occurred, there is a manifest discrepancy between Josephus's account of the murder of Mariamne, in his Jewish War, Book I. c. 22, and his account of the same event, in his Antiquities, Book XV.

---

<sup>3</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part I. Book II. c. iii. Vol. II. p. 866, 3d edit.

chaps. 3 and 7. Again, Josephus, in his *Antiquities*, Book XIV. c. 9, describes Herod as being only fifteen years of age, when his father, Antipater, made him Governor of Galilee: whereas, in Book XVII. c. 6, he describes Herod to be about seventy years of age, when attacked by his last illness, about forty-four years afterwards. Prideaux, in his *Connexion of the Old and New Testament*, (Part II. Book VII. Vol. IV. pp. 688, 699, edit. 1729), says, "It is most likely some transcriber, by mistake, wrote (ιε) the numerical letters for fifteen, instead of (κς) the numerical letters for twenty-five." Here we have a greater chronological variance between the fourteenth and seventeenth Books of Josephus's *Antiquities*, than that which the Editors of the Improved Version declare to exist between the first two and the third chapters of Luke; and the only solution that offers to save the credit of Josephus, is that of Prideaux, which might also be admitted as a solution, if no other presented itself, of the chronological difficulty attending the narrative of the miraculous conception, from the dates given by Luke, in chap. iii. 1 and 23, of his Gospel, and the eclipse mentioned by Josephus, in his *Antiquities*, Book XVII. chap. 6. The Editors must therefore either admit this solution of the chronological difficulties objected by them, or convict Josephus of inexcusable chronological inaccuracy; whichever alternative they choose, they cannot extricate themselves from the horns of the dilemma on which it fixes them.

From the context, I incline to the opinion, that the error in Josephus, is not to be attributed to a transcriber, but to Josephus himself. I shall give Whiston's translation of the passage:—  
 “And seeing that Hyrcanus was of a slow and fearful temper, he [Antipater] made Phasaelus, his eldest son, Governor of Jerusalem, and of the places that were about it, but committed Galilee to Herod, his next son, who was then a very young man, for he was but fifteen years of age; but that youth of his was no impediment to him,” &c.<sup>4</sup> These remarks of Josephus upon the youth of Herod, are appropriate, as we now read the text; but if Josephus wrote twenty-five instead of fifteen, no remark on the youth of Herod had been called for.

Here then are proofs of a want of chronological accuracy, which may well induce us to hesitate before we impugn any portion of the evangelical narratives, upon the single authority of Josephus. But let us examine whether the data furnished by Josephus, justify the conclusion drawn from them by the Editors.

The period assigned for the death of Herod by Lardner, who takes his data from Josephus, forms the basis of the chronological difficulty, with respect to Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus; but Lardner has *proved* that this difficulty admits of a

---

<sup>4</sup> Jos. Antiq. Book XIV. c. 9, §. 2.

satisfactory solution. Taking Josephus for our guide, I agree with Lardner, that it is probable Herod died about seventeen years (some months more or less) before Augustus; but that "Herod, therefore, must have been dead upwards of two years before Christ was born," I cannot concede to our Unitarian theologians.

Lardner has so fully investigated the subject before us, that little, if any, additional light can be thrown upon it: he shall therefore be my principal guide to direct my examination of it. Lardner gives the following sketch of the leading events before and after the death of Herod, as described by the evangelists, in their connection with the events of the same period as described by Josephus.

"About a year and six or seven months before the death of Herod, soon after the arrival of Varus in the province of Syria, in August or September, A. U. 748 or 749, Julian year 40 or 41, Cyrenius (or some other person of eminence) came into Judea, an assessment was made there, and in the time of it, Jesus was born at Bethlehem, in the month of September or October. After the term of forty days was expired, Jesus was presented in the temple at Jerusalem, and Mary made her offering, according to the law. When these things were finished, they went from Jerusalem, and dwelt in some city of Judea, possibly at Bethlehem. In the year following, viz. A. U. 749 or 750,

about the beginning of February,<sup>5</sup> came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? They, being guided by the star, which they had seen in the East, went and worshipped him. After their departure, the Virgin and the child Jesus being now fit for travelling, Joseph was admonished by an angel, to take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, which he did. Herod, soon perceiving, from the wise men's not returning to him, that he had been mocked by them, and being much enraged thereat, sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. He also put to death, at the same time, divers Pharisees, and other persons at Jerusalem, some of his own family and attendants, who, being in expectation of the coming of a great prince, who was to rise up from among them, and by the arrival of the wise men, had been confirmed in the belief,

---

<sup>5</sup> It has been objected to the space of time here allowed between the birth of Jesus, and the inquiry of the wise men, that Herod must, in such case, have been informed of what had passed on the presentation of Jesus at the temple, his jealousy awakened, and an inquiry instituted concerning the child previous to the arrival of the wise men in Judea. To this objection it may be answered, that in Simeon's speech there was no allusion to temporal dominion or power, but rather contrariwise; nothing to attract the notice of the politician, so as for it to be reported to Herod: whereas the inquiry of the wise men was calculated to excite the attention of a prince less jealous of rival claims than was Herod.



that this event was now at hand, expressed themselves in terms which Herod and his son Antipater, and their flatterers, termed seditious. Immediately after these executions, Pheroras's wife was called to an account also, as being supposed to have entertained the same principles with these Pharisees, to whom she had lately shewn great favour in paying the fine imposed upon them, for not entering themselves, and taking the appointed oath, in the time of the forementioned assessment. Pheroras not submitting to the orders given him by Herod in council, to put away his wife, Herod and Pheroras fell out. Hereupon, in the latter end of February, or beginning of March, the same year, Pheroras retires with his wife to his Tetrarchy. And Antipater, having before this, by various practices, and particularly by letters<sup>6</sup> procured from Rome, disposed his father to consent to his making a journey into Italy, and supposing, that by the execution now just over, all turbulent spirits had been awed, and peace and quiet might ensue, set sail for Rome. In the latter end of April, or the beginning of May following, Pheroras

---

<sup>6</sup> "The account of Antipater's sending letters and presents to Rome is in Antiq. XVII. c. 1. §. 1. Of Herod's last quarrel with Pheroras, his forbidding Antipater to converse with Pheroras, or his wife; of Antipater's journey to Rome, and Pheroras's retirement, is *ibid.* c. 3. In the War [lib. i. c. 29, §. 2], Antipater's letters to Rome, and his journey, are mentioned together; but as his journey is here also represented as the effect of advice brought from Rome, it is supposed that these letters were sent by him some time before. And Pheroras's retirement is the thing next mentioned."

dies, is brought to Jerusalem, and buried. No sooner was the mourning for him over, but his servants apply to Herod to make inquiry into the causes of his death: and now, in the middle of May, or soon after, the examinations into this matter began; and though Antipater was sailed from Judea for Rome, and got at a distance from the place in which justice ought to be executed on him; and therefore, according to the ordinary course of things, it might have been supposed that he was in safety; yet from this time, the divine vengeance began to prepare itself against him, till at last it fell upon him for all his horrid crimes. The evidence was at first obscure and imperfect, but opened continually more and more. Herod, in his letters to Antipater, dissembled his resentments, but earnestly pressed his return to Judea. About the middle of December, seven months after the first inquiry into the cause of Pheroras's death, Antipater arrived at Jerusalem, and was tried before Herod, and Varus, President of Syria, and condemned to death. Herod, however, not daring to proceed to execute the sentence without express leave from Augustus, sent ambassadors to Rome, with a full account of what had passed; and soon after, a second embassy, new evidence having been found after the departure of the former. These last ambassadors return to Judea, with full power from Augustus, about the middle of March, A. U. 750 or 751, soon after which Antipater was

executed, and in five days after Herod himself died, about a year and five or six months after the birth of Jesus.”<sup>7</sup>

Lardner supposes that Joseph, after the presentation of the child Jesus at the temple, did not return to Nazareth till after his journey into Egypt. I should rather suppose that he returned immediately to Nazareth, as I have hinted in the second chapter, p. 62: it seems implied in the words of Luke ii. 39: — “And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth.” Neither does this conjecture exclude the possibility of the wise men, who arrived in Judea not long before the feast of the Passover, having met with Jesus in some city of Judea. We learn, from Luke ii. 41, that his parents went every year to Jerusalem at that feast, a time which they would therefore probably select for visiting their relations in that part of the country (*See* Luke i. 39); and the star might have led the wise men to the house of Elizabeth, or to any other house at which they were then on a visit.

It is not necessary to detain the reader with a detail of the grounds upon which Lardner has made the foregoing arrangement of the events preceding the death of Herod; they may be seen at large in his *Cred. Part I. Book II. chaps. ii. and iii.* The

---

<sup>7</sup> Lardner's *Cred. Part I. Book II. c. iii. Vol. II. p. 800—804.*

chronological difficulty before adverted to attends the preceding statement, which it will be proper now to consider. If Christ was born in August or September, A. U. 748 or 749, and he was about thirty years of age in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, and if this fifteenth year be computed from the death of Augustus, there is an apparent discrepancy of two or three years. We must either find some means of reconciling this difference between Josephus and Luke, or an error must have crept into our present copies of Josephus or of Luke.

The point we have to ascertain is, whether there is not another era than the death of Augustus, from which the commencement of the reign of Tiberius might have been calculated. If there should appear *any ground* for such a twofold calculation of the commencement of the reign of Tiberius, as may meet the difficulty under consideration, the candid and impartial critic will cheerfully hail it as reconciling Josephus and Luke with each other, without impeaching the integrity of the text in our present copies of those authors.

Prideaux and Lardner say, that Augustus made Tiberius his colleague in the empire two or three years before his death. Mr. Belsham denies this, as a supposition of Lardner, without proof; and why does he deny it?—Because of the dissimulation practised by Tiberius, on the death of Augustus, in order to secure the imperial dignity to himself; than which objection, nothing could

evinced a greater inattention to the state of the Roman Empire at the period of which we are writing. It presupposes an old established dynasty, which gives the natural descendant, or next heir to the deceased emperor, an undoubted and legitimate claim to the succession. Any one, the least acquainted with the history of Rome, must know that this will not apply to the state of the Roman Empire at the death of Augustus.

Augustus obtained his pre-eminent station in the Roman republic by the defeat of Mark Anthony, and not by any legal right. The fate of his uncle, Julius Cæsar, was a warning to him; so that after he had been invested with all the offices of state, he went to the senate and resigned his sovereign power, when "the house unanimously besought him with many words and intreaties, that he alone would take upon him the administration of the government; and, after many arguments and persuasions, they compelled him, as it were, to accept of the sovereignty, under the title of *Prince*, a word sometimes used under the republic, as in the case of the *Prince* of the Senate: so that he would appear to be no more than the first man in the state. Thus, Octavius Cæsar (afterwards Augustus) by his artifice, in pretending to lay down all his power and authority, got it confirmed to him both by the senate and people."<sup>s</sup>

---

<sup>s</sup> Hooke's Roman History, Vol. XI. pp. 437, 438, edit. 1771.

He would only accept the sovereignty for the limited term of ten years, at the expiration of which term he was prevailed upon to receive it for another ten years, and had it renewed to him in like manner till his death. Tiberius was not the son of Augustus, but of his wife, Livia, by Tiberius Nero, her first husband. It was not till after the death of his grandsons, Caius and Lucius, that Augustus adopted Tiberius for his successor, about ten years before his death ; and, about seven or eight years afterwards, he made him, through a decree of the senate, his colleague in the empire. But, as Mr. Belsham denies that there is any proof of this last circumstance produced by Lardner, I cannot more completely vindicate Lardner from this aspersion than by letting him speak for himself.

“Several of the Roman historians have expressly mentioned Tiberius’s being taken into partnership in the government with Augustus. Velleius Paterculus, who lived in the reigns of these two emperors, says, ‘that at the desire of Augustus there was a law passed by the senate and people of Rome, that Tiberius might have equal power with him in all the provinces and armies.’ (Vellei. lib. ii. c. 121). Suetonius says, ‘There was a law made, that Tiberius should govern the provinces jointly with Augustus, and make the census with him.’ (Suet. in Tiber. cap. 20, 21). Tacitus says, ‘That Tiberius was made colleague in the empire [with Augustus], and taken into partnership in the

tribunician power, and recommended to all the armies.' (Tacit. Ann. lib. i. c. 3.) And there are, in this last-mentioned historian, frequent references to Tiberius's partnership in the empire with Augustus.' (Tacit. Ann. lib. i. c. 10, 11)."

"I must be allowed to be particular in the account of some things said by Dio. In his history of the affairs, A. U. 765, A. D. 12, he says, 'Augustus, now advanced in years, recommended, in a writing, Germanicus to the senate, and the senate to Tiberius. He did not, however, read the writing himself (not being able), but Germanicus, as he had been wont to do. But yet he did not lay aside the care of the public.' (Dio, lib. lvi. p. 587, B. C.) Under the next year, A. U. 766, A. D. 13, the same historian says:— 'Augustus then accepted, for the fifth time, though unwillingly, the government of the state for ten years, and renewed also the tribunician power to Tiberius.' (Ibid. p. 588, B.) He says also, 'That Augustus, on account of his great age (which likewise hindered him from coming to the senate, except very rarely), desired he might have twenty annual counsellors. And a decree was passed, that whatever was enacted in council by him, together with Tiberius, and those said counsellors, and the consuls in being, and the consuls elect, and his grandsons adopted by him, and any others whom he should call to his council, should be ratified, and deemed of the same authority as if

enacted by the authority of the whole senate.' (Ibid. C. D.) This mention of Tiberius, and of him only by name, in this decree of the senate, next after Augustus, appears to me remarkable.—Once more: Dio says, 'that upon the death of Augustus, Tiberius immediately sent away letters from Nola to the armies, and all the provinces, as emperor, but yet did not call himself so; though that, with other titles, had been given him by a decree.' (Dio, lib. lvii. p. 602, D.)"

"There is a particular fact related of Tiberius by several historians, said to be done by him when *Prince*, which yet must have been done before Augustus died. Pliny says that Tiberius was much given to drinking; 'and that it was thought, that for this reason, Lucius Piso had been chosen by him to be Præfect of Rome, because he had continued two days and two nights drinking with him when *Prince*.' (Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xiv. c. 22.) Suetonius says, 'That Tiberius, in his first campaigns, was much reflected on for his excess in drinking; and that afterwards, when *Prince*, in the very time of the correction of the public manners, he spent a night and two days in eating and drinking with Pomponius Flaccus and Lucius Piso: to the former he gave immediately the province of Syria, and to the other the præfecture of the city.' (Suet. in Tib. cap. 42). It may be worth while to observe, with Pagi,



that these two writers, who tell us the story of this drunken bout of Tiberius, and the consequences of it, seem not to have had their accounts from one and the same source. They differ from each other in two or three particulars. One says that this piece of excess lasted two days and two nights; the other, one night and two days. Pliny mentions only the preferment of Piso, Suetonius adds that of Flaccus also. But they both agree in saying, that Tiberius was then *Prince*; and Suetonius adds a very particular circumstance as to the time,—that it was during the correction of the public manners, which may very naturally lead us to what he had said of the law passed, that Tiberius should govern the provinces jointly with Augustus, and make the census with him; one part of which at Rome was the correction of manners. But we must inquire somewhat more particularly into the time of this act of intemperance. It may be easily inferred from Tacitus; who, relating the affairs of the year in which Domitius Ænobarbus and M. Furius Camillus were consuls, sc. A. U. 785, A. D. 32, says:—‘Then Piso had the honour of a public funeral by decree of the senate, having behaved in his office to general satisfaction for twenty years.’ (Tacit. Ann. lib. vi. cap. 11). If we go back twenty years, we are brought to the twelfth year of the Christian era, and the 765th of the city;

in which year, according to Tacitus, Piso must have been Præfect of Rome, which is two years before the death of Augustus.”<sup>9</sup>

After having replied to some objections, Lardner proceeds:—“ I imagine that this fact is now cleared up, and vindicated against the several objections which have been made to it; and that Piso was appointed or chosen to be Præfect of the city of Rome by Tiberius, then *Prince*, two years before the death of Augustus, namely, in A. U. 765. But before I quite leave this story, I would strengthen the argument founded upon it, by a remark or two upon the title of *Prince*, given here to Tiberius by Pliny and Suetonius.”

“ It is well known that *Prince* was the soft title which Augustus chose, rather than that of King or Dictator. This title, therefore, when used absolutely, is equivalent to Emperor: and Dio says, that Tiberius had the title of Emperor given him by a decree, before Augustus died, as has been observed already. Moreover, this title of Emperor is frequently given by Roman and Greek authors to Titus and Trajan, on account of their tribunician and proconsular power, which they enjoyed; the former in the life-time of his father Vespasian, the latter of Nerva.—Pliny the elder, in his Dedication of his Natural History to Titus, written before the death of Vespasian, calls Titus

---

<sup>9</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part. I. Book II. c. iii. Vol. II. p. 808—814.

Emperor more than once. (Plin. in Præfat.) Philostratus says, that Titus was declared Emperor at Rome, and admitted to equal power in the government with his father. (Philost. Vit. Apollonii, lib. vi. cap. 30, p. 269. Lipsiac, 1709.) It is in vain therefore to say that Titus was called Emperor in his father's life-time, purely on account of his having been saluted Emperor by his soldiers in the camp, or in the sense in which this word was used under the commonwealth, since Philostratus says, he was declared Emperor at Rome. Moreover, Capitolinus calls Vespasian and Titus Princes, without any distinction. (In Marc. Antonin. Philos.) All these passages thus laid together may satisfy us that Prince and Emperor are equivalent in these writers; and that Tiberius had a right to the title of Prince, even during the life-time of Augustus, after he was made his colleague in the empire. I shall refer the reader to but one passage more, in which Pliny the younger assures us that Trajan was declared Emperor by Nerva in his life-time. (Plin. Paneg. c. 8.)”

“There were two different computations of Tiberius's reign in the time of St. Clement of Alexandria; for having first said, that Augustus reigned forty-three years, and Tiberius twenty-two (Clem. Strom. lib. i. p. 339. à Parisiis, 1629), he adds:—‘But some reckon the reign of the Roman emperors thus:—Augustus reigned forty-six years four months and one day; then Tiberius,

twenty-six years six months nineteen days.' (Id. Ib. C.)"<sup>10</sup>

I abstain from quoting all that Dr. Lardner has written on this subject, to avoid being prolix: the reader has sufficient to convince him that Lardner does not advance his positions without proof. In his calculations to ascertain the time of Herod's death, and the birth of Christ, he has unavoidably had more recourse to conjecture, than in ascertaining the single fact of the proconsular or joint empire of Tiberius and Augustus, although, from what Mr. Belsham has said, the reader would have drawn a contrary conclusion. For proof of the latter fact, we have, among other Roman authors, the testimony of Tacitus, to whom Mr. Belsham has referred Mr. B. Carpenter, as evidence for the contrary opinion. Now no inference can be drawn, from what Tacitus says of the dissimulation of Tiberius, to impugn his direct and explicit testimony to the joint empire of Tiberius and Augustus. Further: if the objections of Mr. Belsham were new, and had never presented themselves to Dr. Lardner, it might perhaps be presumed that, had he possessed the new lights<sup>11</sup> thrown on this subject

---

<sup>10</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part I. Book II. c. iii. Vol. II. p. 819—824.

<sup>11</sup> In a sermon preached at Hackney, 1794, Mr. Belsham introduces the chronological objection to the introductory chapters of Matthew and Luke now under consideration. After observing that these chapters are sufficiently proved to be spurious, and the whole story a fiction, by Dr. Priestley, Mr. Pope, and Mr. Evanson, he adds, that this chronological objection "has escaped the attention

by Mr. Belsham, his conclusions would have been different: indeed, Mr. Belsham himself has inferred as much. But what is the fact?—the very same objections now urged by him, Dr. Lardner has noticed, with his usual candour and good sense, and exposed their futility. He shall speak for himself, whilst in so doing he will refute Mr. Belsham.

“ It is objected: If Tiberius had been made colleague in the empire with Augustus, there could have been no reason for those fears about the succession of Tiberius, which Livia shewed upon the death of Augustus (Tacit. Ann. lib. i. cap. 5); nor would Tiberius have hesitated to accept the empire when offered to him by the senate. Or, indeed, what occasion for any new investiture at all?

“ But to this, I think, it is easy to answer—that it is no surprising thing that Livia should be under some pain, when the settlement of her son in the empire was at stake. Though Tiberius had been partner in the empire, yet certainly the

---

of those sagacious critics.” (See Note, p. 17). That is, *those sagacious critics* knew nothing of the above-mentioned chronological difficulty; they were strangers to the learned labours of Lardner, and were ignorant of what he had written on this subject. All this is to be believed, in order to evade the consequence of admitting, that they were convinced that Lardner had succeeded in obviating every objection which could be advanced on this subject. And the only notice Mr. Belsham and his coadjutors deign to take of the arguments adduced by a man of Lardner's unquestionable talents and learning, supported by the best authorities, is, to denounce them as *gratuitous suppositions, miserable shifts, and vague hypotheses, the most improbable in themselves.*

death of Augustus made a great change. Germanicus was very popular, and at the head of a numerous army. (Tacit. Ann. lib. i. cap. 33, 35. Dio, lib. lvii. p. 603.) And as for Tiberius's hesitation, he had been hitherto but partner in the empire, and some kind of new investiture was needful. It is true, he carried his dissimulation very far; but Augustus himself never renewed a fresh term of government (which he did several times) but with much difficulty, and not till he had been overcome by importunity, and the consideration of the necessity of affairs. However, this dissimulation of Tiberius has afforded a new proof that he had been colleague with Augustus. For, as Tacitus and Dio intimate very plainly the fears which Tiberius had of Germanicus, so Suetonius in particular says, "He pretended a bad state of health, that Germanicus might entertain hopes of a speedy succession, or at least a partnership in the empire." (Suet. in Tib. cap. 25.) But such an expectation had been ridiculous in Germanicus, and this pretence of Tiberius could never have had the effect he designed, if no one had been partner in the empire before."

"But the chief objection against the supposition, that St. Luke has computed the reign of Tiberius from the time of his proconsular empire, seems to be this: That it does not appear that any writers have computed the reign of those, who were colleagues in the empire, by the epoch of their

proconsular empire, and that in particular there are no traces of this computation of Tiberius's reign. (S. Basnage, *Annal. Pol. Eccles.* A. D. 11, n. iv.)"

"To this I answer: There is reason to think that people did often compute according to the epoch of the proconsular empire. Pagi mentions a medal, which has this inscription: *In the xi. new sacred year of the Emperor Titus Cesar Vespasian Augustus.* (Pagi Crit. in Baron. A. D. 81, n. iii.) Now Titus reigned alone, after his father's death, but a little above two years. It will not be expected I should here attempt to explain the meaning of the epoch of the *new sacred year*. All that I shall observe is, that it appears not to have been used upon the coins of any emperors besides those of Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, and Nerva; and that it does not begin at any one common period, such as the building or dedication of any one particular temple, but that the numbers answer exactly to the years of the several emperors on whose coins it is found. (Pagi Crit. in Baron. A. D. 81, n. iii.) And Pagi is of the opinion, that it is an epoch chiefly used by the people of Syria and Egypt, because the epithet *sacred* is more common upon their coins than any others. (Pagi, *ibid.* n. iv.) And I cannot but think that there were different computations of the length of Nerva's and Trajan's reigns; and that they were owing to this, that Trajan was for some time

Nerva's colleague in the empire. Mr. Dodwell (*Vid. Append. ad Dissert. Cypr. n. 39, 40*) was of opinion that Nerva did actually resign the empire to Trajan before his death; and so Aurelius Victor (*Aurel. Vict. de Cæsar. in Nerva*) and Lactantius (*De Mort. Persecut. c. 18*) seem to say. I think indeed that Nerva did not resign, not only because Eutropius (*Eutrop. lib. ix. cap. 28*) says that Diocletian was the first of all the Roman emperors that did so; but especially because the younger Pliny, who served under Nerva and Trajan, and knew them both very well, says nothing of it, though he often mentions their joint empire (*Plin. Paneg. c. 7, 8, and 9*); but I think that the notion which the forementioned authors had of Nerva's resigning, may be very well accounted for, upon the supposition that they had met with different computations of the time of these two princes' reigns in some ancient writers: and their mistake is not easily accounted for otherwise. As for Tiberius, I take it for granted that it has been fully proved that he was for some time partner in the empire with Augustus, and particularly that it has been made to appear that Piso was Præfect of Rome twenty years, and that he was put into that post by the appointment or procurement of Tiberius. Thus much, I think, Basnage allows (*ubi supra. A. D. 11, n. ii.*): and Suetonius and Pliny both say that Tiberius was then Prince."



“That we have so few examples of this way of computing the reign of Tiberius, is not to be wondered at, considering how few ancient writers, who lived near his time, are come down to us, and especially such as lived in the provinces where this epoch must have been chiefly used. The distinct computation of Augustus’s reign to the time of his death, and of Tiberius’s after him, was undoubtedly most commodious; and for this reason, probably, the computation of Tiberius’s reign from the time of his proconsular empire was soon dropped.”<sup>12</sup>

After Lardner has, with his usual precision, and attention to the minutiae of evidence, endeavoured to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the date of the commencement of Tiberius’s proconsular empire, he proceeds:—“It appears to me uncertain when this proconsular empire began, whether about two years or about three years before Augustus died. Let us, however, adjust the numbers in St. Luke to this computation of the reign of Tiberius, which commenced either about two years or about three years before his empire, after the death of Augustus: and we will have an eye to the two dates of our Saviour’s nativity above mentioned, namely, September or October, A. U. 748 and 749.”

“If Tiberius’s proconsular empire began about three years before Augustus died, on the 28th of

---

<sup>12</sup> Lardner’s Cred. Part I. Book II. c. iii. Vol. II. p. 825—832.

August, A. U. 764, A. D. 11, then this fifteenth of Tiberius's reign (according to this computation of it) began August 28th, A. U. 778, A. D. 25. Supposing that John the Baptist began his ministry November following, in the same year, and that Jesus was baptized by him the 6th of January following, in A. U. 779, A. D. 26; then, upon the supposition that Jesus was born in September, A. U. 748, he would be at his baptism thirty years of age, and some months over. If Tiberius's proconsular empire commenced about two years before the death of Augustus, in A. U. 765, A. D. 12, then the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius began in A. U. 779, A. D. 26. And supposing that John the Baptist began his ministry in November of that year, and that Jesus was baptized by him the 6th of January following, A. U. 780, A. D. 27; then, upon the supposition that Jesus was born in September, A. U. 749, he would be, at the time of his baptism, thirty years of age, and some months over: or, if born A. U. 748, he would be somewhat more than thirty-one years of age. We will put this matter one way more. If John the Baptist began his ministry in the fifteenth of Tiberius, A. U. 778, A. D. 25 (as in the first stating of this question), but did not baptize Jesus till the 6th of January, A. U. 780, A. D. 27, after he had preached somewhat above a year, then Jesus would be, at his baptism, thirty years of age and odd months, if he was born A. U. 749; thirty-one years

of age and some odd months, if born the latter end of the year 748.

“ I see not but that we have a very good right to take those dates of these events, which appear most favourable to St. Luke; since it is not absolutely certain when Herod died, or when Tiberius’s proconsular empire began: nor have any of the writers of harmonies determined, that I know of, beyond contradiction, the space of time between the commencement of John the Baptist’s ministry and our Saviour’s baptism.<sup>13</sup>

Such are the arguments and authorities of Lardner, to prove that Tiberius was taken into partnership in the empire with Augustus, two or three years before the death of the latter, and to prove the probability of Luke’s computing from this partnership; which B., in his answer to the Quarterly Review, is pleased to call *a mere gratuitous assumption, to support an hypothesis*. Such are the arguments which Mr. Belsham finds it more convenient to dispose of, by calling them *miserable shifts*, or *hypotheses the most improbable in themselves*, than to attempt a refutation of them.

We will just recapitulate the dates upon which Lardner has made his calculations. Augustus died the 19th of August, A. U. 767; the fifteenth year of Tiberius, from the death of Augustus, would commence the 19th of August, A. U. 781. Herod

---

<sup>13</sup> Lardner’s Cred. Part I. Vol. II. p. 837—839.

died before the Passover, in A. U. 750 or 751. From the data furnished by Josephus, compared with Luke's narrative, Lardner calculates that Christ was born in the autumn of the year 748 or 749, which makes the birth of Christ precede the death of Herod about a year and a half; therefore, if the fifteenth year of Tiberius, mentioned by Luke, is calculated from the death of Augustus, Christ must have been, at the time of his baptism, between thirty-two and thirty-three years of age, which makes an apparent discrepancy of two or three years; but if Luke be supposed to calculate the fifteenth year of Tiberius from the beginning of his proconsular empire, then the dates mentioned by Luke perfectly coincide with Josephus and the subsequent Christian writers, who place our Lord's crucifixion in the fifteenth year of Tiberius's sole empire. This solution of the difficulty by Lardner, preserves the accuracy of the texts of Luke and Josephus, taking them in their strict sense. Lardner has, with an impartiality and candour peculiar to him, shown how other writers have attempted to extend the discrepancy to six or seven years, but denies himself that any such discrepancy exists, and assigns his reasons for reducing it to two or three years. What then can we think of the candour or honesty of the writer, who, with these facts before him, writes as follows :

“ This very learned Professor charges the Editors of the Improved Version with ‘ adding the

authority of Lardner's name, in behalf of a position which Lardner has most triumphantly overthrown.' —That Dr. Magee's assertion is as wide from the truth as the east is from the west, I hope to make obvious to the meanest understanding.

" In the third chapter of Luke, the evangelist relates, that in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar, Jesus began to be about thirty years of age; and, consequently, he must have been born fifteen years before the death of Augustus, and no more, if Luke is right. But Dr. Lardner has shown, to the satisfaction of all learned men, that Herod died at least seventeen years and nine months before the decease of Augustus; and, therefore, if Luke's assertion is correct, and I see no reason to discredit it, Herod died at least two years and three quarters before Christ was born. All the circumstances, therefore, which are related in the second chapter of Matthew, must be fictitious.

" The reader plainly perceives, that the authority of Lardner is appealed to for no other purpose than to prove the year when Herod died; and it is upon Luke's authority that we believe that this event happened before the birth of Christ. Dr. Lardner did not believe this fact, because he did not give credit to the correctness of Luke. For the same reason, Dr. Magee does not believe it. Neither did the learned and laborious calculators of the difference between the true and vulgar era of Christ's birth (of which the learned

professor supposes that the Editors of the Improved Version, poor ignorant souls! never heard), believe Luke's account. *They* all imagine, that when the evangelist says, that Jesus *began* to be about thirty years of age, he means that he was five and thirty or six and thirty, or even seven and thirty years old. This *they* call using a round number; and *they* impute to a historian, whom they regard as inspired, an incorrectness of language, of which any common writer would be ashamed. The Unitarians hope that they shall not be accused of 'taking unwarrantable liberties with the Sacred Scriptures,' because they believe that the evangelical historian wrote from the best information, and that he means what his words properly express."<sup>14</sup>

For a refutation of what may appear argumentative, and bearing upon the point before us in the foregoing extracts, the reader is referred to what has been already said in the preceding pages. But *A Calm Inquirer* blunders in his calculation, when he peremptorily asserts that Christ "must have been born fifteen years before the death of Augustus, and no more." If Jesus was thirty years of age when Tiberius entered on his fifteenth year, that is, when he had reigned fourteen years complete, and this fifteenth year is computed from the death of Augustus, Jesus must have been born

---

<sup>14</sup> Reply to Dr. Magee, by *A Calm Inquirer after Revealed Truth*. Monthly Repository for August, 1813, Vol. VIII. pp. 495, 496.

sixteen, and not fifteen years before the death of Augustus. The numerous errors into which the bias of system hurries the Unitarian critic, ought to teach him to advance his positions with less confidence and dogmatism.

It may indeed appear "obvious to the meanest understanding, that the authority of Lardner is adduced," by *A Calm Inquirer*, in the foregoing passage, "for no other purpose, than to prove the year when Herod died." But this is only diverting the reader's attention from the real question; which is, Whether the Editors of the Improved Version have, or have not, so appealed to the authority of Lardner, as to justify the charge preferred against them by Dr. Magee? This can be decided only by an examination of the manner in which the Editors have expressed themselves, and this *A Calm Inquirer* has prudently kept out of sight. In their Note on Matt. i. 16, the Editors say:—"If it be true, as Luke relates, chap. iii. 23, that Jesus was entering upon his thirtieth year (*See Wakefield's Translation*), in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, he must have been born two years, at least, after the death of Herod; a circumstance which alone invalidates the whole story. See Lardner's Works, Vol. i. p. 432."

I appeal to the common sense of every man of "sound understanding," whether, if language have any definite meaning, Lardner is not here referred

to, as having proved that Christ was born two years at least after the death of Herod, and that this circumstance alone invalidates the whole story of the miraculous conception; thus "adducing the authority of Lardner's name in behalf of a position, which Lardner has most triumphantly overthrown." The same observation will apply to their Note, p. 129. And though the reference to Lardner, in the Note on Luke i. 4, may possibly admit of the construction put upon it by *A Calm Inquirer*, what reader, until so informed by this writer, would have limited the reference to the latter clause of the sentence?

When *A Calm Inquirer* says, that Lardner did not give credit to the correctness of Luke; that he imagined, when the Evangelist says, that Jesus began to be about thirty years of age, he means, that he was five and thirty, or six and thirty, or even seven and thirty years old, and that he imputes to a historian, whom he regards as inspired, an incorrectness of language of which any common writer would be *ashamed*: when *A Calm Inquirer* says these things, he says what is not true. He either knew it, or did not know it; in either case all confidence in his statements is destroyed.

A marked difference is observable between the modest and cautious manner in which Lardner draws his conclusions from the clearest proofs, and after the most acute and patient investigation; and the dogmatic and peremptory manner in which



Mr. Belsham draws lame conclusions from insufficient premises.

I say, *insufficient premises*; for it has been shown, that the dissimulation of Tiberius, at the death of Augustus, as described by Tacitus, cannot justify the inference drawn from it by Mr. Belsham; especially in opposition to the direct testimony of the same Tacitus, that Tiberius was made colleague in the empire with Augustus. Again, equally inconclusive is the inference which Mr. Belsham draws from the commencement of Tiberius's reign being calculated, by the Roman historians, from his sole empire, and not from his joint empire with Augustus; that, therefore, Luke must have calculated the commencement of his reign from the same epoch. This argument is, at the best, negative, and therefore not conclusive; but my extracts from Lardner prove the premise of Mr. Belsham, that "the practice of giving a double date to the reign of an emperor was never heard of till the times of the lower empire," not to be established with sufficient certainty to form the basis of any argument. And if Luke has deviated from the Roman historians in reckoning the commencement of Tiberius's reign from his proconsular empire, he has only differed from the Roman historians, as the author of the Second of Kings and Jeremiah have differed from the Babylonians, by computing the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign from his

joint empire with his father, instead of from his father's death.<sup>15</sup>

I shall not attempt to reconcile the Note of the Editors, in Matthew, page 2,—where they say, “ Luke relates, chap. iii. 20, that Jesus was entering upon his thirtieth year, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius,”—with their Note in Luke, page 120, where they say, “ The Evangelist [Luke] expressly affirms, that Jesus had completed his thirtieth year in the fifteenth year of Tiberius.” But only observe, that it appears, from the Editors' own shewing, that when Luke says, “ And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age,” he may be understood with some latitude. If we were to compute Luke's fifteenth year of Tiberius from his sole empire, Jesus would then have been only thirty-two, or, at the most, thirty-three years of age, according to Lardner's calculation (and not nearly thirty-five, as the Editors erroneously assert, upon the authority of Lardner); which is sufficiently exact, as the expression *about* (ὥστε)<sup>16</sup>, used by

<sup>15</sup> Prideaux's Connection, Part I. Book I. Vol. I. p. 85, 10th edit.

<sup>16</sup> In their Note on Luke iii. 23, p. 129, the Editors observe, that “ ὥστε, circiter, may be understood of one who is something more than thirty years of age, as well as of one who is under that age;” And afterwards, with their usual consistency, they say in the same Note, “ It appears, from the uncommon accuracy with which Luke dates his history, that in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, our Lord, then entering upon his ministry, was no more than thirty years of age.” Thus it appears, from these learned Editors, that, according to Luke, Jesus was *entering upon*, that is, *had completed*, that is, *was something more or something less than thirty years of age*, that is, *was no more than thirty years of age*, in the fifteenth year of Tiberius.

Luke, does not convey that exactness of meaning or precision with respect to time implied in the objection.

Little remains for me to add :—the main fact to be proved was, whether Tiberius was not partner in the empire with Augustus two or three years before the death of the latter? Let this fact be proved,—and, I think, it is fully proved,—then it follows, that Luke must have calculated his fifteenth year of Tiberius from that epoch, as it reconciles his dates and his history with other histories of the same era; and when, upon any other supposition, he cannot be reconciled with the early Christian writers, who place our Lord's crucifixion in the fifteenth year of Tiberius's sole government, when the two Gemini were consuls of Rome.<sup>17</sup> This last fact appears to have made a strong impression on the mind of Lardner; and, I must confess, that it appears to me decisive. In reply to the solitary negative objection, that the Roman historians calculated Tiberius's reign from the death of Augustus, it might suffice to say, that Luke was a Jew, a provincial and not a Roman writer, and one who lived very near the date of the events recorded; he, therefore, most probably calculated from that epoch, which, at that early period, was used in the provinces.

---

<sup>17</sup> See Tertul. advers. Jud. c. 8. Africanus apud Hieron. Dan. c. 9. Lactant. Just. lib. iv. c. 10. De Mort. Persecut. c. 2.—See Lardner's Cred. Part I. Book II. chap. iii. § 4. Vol. II. p. 865; who has, in a note, given the passages in these authors.

“The date of the enrolment, [Luke] chap. ii. 1, 2, is a great historical difficulty,” say our Editors, in their Note on Luke, page 121. As this is nearly allied, though subordinate, to the grand objection we have just been considering, we will dispose of it also before we close this chapter. Luke’s words, according to our authorized version, are, ‘And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed (and this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed, with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child.’ Chap. ii. 1—4.

The principal, and only difficulty, of importance, which attaches to this passage, is, that it makes (as it is translated above) the tax, or enrolment, take place when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, which was not till several years after the birth of our Saviour. Some writers have attempted to surmount this difficulty, by supposing that the enrolment took place at the time of the birth of our Saviour, but that no tax was levied in consequence of it, till the deposition of Archelaus, when Cyrenius was governor of Syria; and that the words in the parenthesis allude, not to the

enrolment, but to the tax, which was afterwards levied on that enrolment.

Archbishop Newcome has adopted Lardner's translation of the parenthesis, and renders it, "this was the first enrolment of Cyrenius, *afterwards* governor of Syria;" which, by making the phrase, governor of Syria, merely an epithet to distinguish this Cyrenius from others of the same name, entirely obviates the difficulty: and the Editors of the Improved Version, by adopting Newcome's version, have themselves disposed of this difficulty, and precluded the necessity of any further remark.

Prideaux, Dr. Wall, Archbishop Newcome, and others, think, that the enrolment mentioned by Luke, extended through the whole Roman empire; that Augustus had three of these enrolments during his reign, and that this mentioned by Luke was the middle one, in the consulship of C. Marcus Censorinus and C. Asinius Gallus, about three years before the birth of Christ, the enrolment having occupied three years before it extended to Judea, a remote province of the empire; and this explanation of the lapse of time, from the issuing of the decree to its being carried into effect in Judea, obviates any objection to the apparent discrepancy of three years. Lardner, however, differs from these writers; and thinks that the census of Augustus, mentioned by Prideaux, was a census of Roman citizens only, and that the census mentioned by Luke, was not of the whole Roman

empire, but only of the dominions of Herod, King of Judea, with whom Augustus was, at that time, offended, and threatened to treat him as a subject: and Lardner has proved that the original admits of this limited interpretation. The adoption of either hypothesis presents so little real difficulty, that it will suffice to refer the reader, who may wish for further information, to Prideaux's *Connection*, Part II. Book IX. Vol. IV. p. 917 to 921; and Lardner's *Cred.* Part I. Book II. chap. i. Vol. II. p. 558 to 745.

## CHAP. VI.

*Objections to the Events recorded in the First Two Chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, from the Silence of the Heathen Historians, and of Josephus, examined—probable Allusion to some of these Events by Josephus—Objection, that there is no Allusion to these Events in any other Passage of the Sacred Writings, examined—Allusions to the Miraculous Conception in the other Two Gospels, and in the Epistles—Several Passages adduced from the Gospels of St. Mark and St. John—The Attempt of the Editors of the Improved Version, to evade the obvious Import of the Proem to the latter Gospel, examined—Strictures on their construction of ἀρχή—of ἐγένετο—Review of the different Unitarian Expositions of the Proem to St. John's Gospel.*

“IT is indeed highly improbable,” say the Editors of the Improved Version, “that no notice should have been taken of these extraordinary events by any contemporary writer; that no expectation should be excited by them; and that no allusion should have been made to them in any other passage of the Sacred Writings.”

The slightest acquaintance with the histories of the period to which this objection adverts, is sufficient to prove that there is more sound than

sense in the first branch of this objection. The comparative insignificance of Judea, as a remote province of the Roman empire, appears from the little space which it occupies in the pages of the Roman historian. Tacitus and Strabo do not even mention the names of the sons of Herod that succeeded him; they very briefly state, that Herod received the kingdom of Anthony, was confirmed in it by Augustus, and that, after his death, his kingdom was divided between three of his sons. Strabo also adds, that Herod put some of his sons to death, as guilty of designs against himself, but without descending into any particulars.<sup>1</sup> The notice of the events recorded in the first chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, by historians, who so very slightly advert to the history of the Jews, would have been more extraordinary than their silence: neither does the silence of Josephus invalidate those narratives; for, as Lardner observes, "The most exact and diligent historians have omitted many events that happened within the compass of those times, of which they undertook to write.—Suetonius, Tacitus, and Dio Cassius, have all three written of the reign of Tiberius; but it is no objection against the veracity of any one of them, that he has mentioned some things of that emperor, which have been omitted by the rest. No more is it any

---

<sup>1</sup> See Tacit. Hist. lib. v. c. 9. Strabo, lib. xvi. p. 765, ed. Casaub. and Lardner's Cred. Part I. Book II. c. ii.



objection against St. Matthew, that he has related an action of Herod, not mentioned by Josephus."<sup>2</sup>

The works of Josephus afford unequivocal proof, that on points, which affect the honour and religion of the Jewish nation, his accuracy or impartiality is not to be depended on : for example, his fabulous additions to the history of Moses, and his omission of the Israelites' idolatrous worship of the golden calf made by Aaron ; the former added, to magnify the character of the Jewish legislator ; the latter suppressed, because it reflected disgrace on the character of the Israelites and of their high priest, Aaron ; and this last was a fact of which Josephus could not be ignorant.

Thus, if Josephus were informed of the events preceding the birth of Christ, recorded by the evangelists, it would not be difficult to divine his motives for suppressing them. His writings, with the exception of one passage, which Lardner has proved to be spurious<sup>3</sup>, evince him to be a Jew,

<sup>2</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part I. Book II. c. ii. Vol. II. p. 747.

<sup>3</sup> The passage here alluded to, is in the Seventeenth Book of Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* : if Josephus wrote it, he must have been a Christian. Though this passage is in all the copies of Josephus now extant, it is neither quoted nor referred to by Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, Arnobius, or Lactantius. Now if it had been in the Works of Josephus, it could not have been overlooked by these apologists for the Christian religion. It further appears, that this passage was wanting in the copies of Josephus used by Photius, a writer of the ninth century, who revised the Works of Josephus as a critic. This external evidence against the genuineness of this passage, is corroborated by internal evidence: the course of the narrative in

zealously attached to the Mosaic economy, and desirous of giving it importance in the estimation of the Greeks and Romans. Now he could not, in the opinion of the Jews, have more effectually counteracted this object, than by recording events which favoured the Christian cause.

In Book XVII. chap. iii. of his *Antiquities*, Josephus relates that several Pharisees were put to death by Herod, because they had predicted that, in pursuance of a divine decree, Herod's government should cease, and his posterity be deprived of it; and that Herod slew also all those of his own family who had consented to what the Pharisees foretold. As this happened about the same time, and the occasion was similar to that which produced the slaughter of the infants, we may conclude that the slaughter at Bethlehem, and the execution at Jerusalem, were both consequences of the jealousy excited in the breast of Herod, by the inquiries of the wise men; that

Josephus, is interrupted by this spurious passage, with which it has no connection whatever. Again, if Josephus had been a Christian, how are we to account for his impenetrable silence on a change so important, that not the least allusion to it appears in his *Life*, written by himself? If a Christian, could he have failed to point out the real cause of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, of the Jewish state and polity? On these points he writes like a Jew, who either had not seen the evangelical accounts of Christ, or who did not believe them. Eusebius is the earliest writer, in whose works this spurious passage is to be found; and he comes too late to oppose singly to the evidence on the other side.—See Lardner's *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, chap. iv.

what Josephus calls the predictions of the Pharisees, was no other than the Pharisees' explanation of a Jewish prophecy of the government and birth of Christ, related in the second chapter of Matthew.

It may be objected, that, according to Josephus, the predictions of the Pharisees did not relate to Jesus, but to Pheroras, his wife, and children. In reply, it may be said, that if Pheroras and his wife had been so nearly concerned in the prophecy of the Pharisees, would Antipater, who was, if possible, more ambitious and cruel than his father Herod, have continued in terms of intimacy and confidence with Pheroras and his wife, after such an attempt, by them, to overturn his claims to the crown? Would he have engaged them in a conspiracy against his father's life, and which they were to carry into effect during his absence from Judea, on a journey to Rome? What other conclusion then can we draw from these considerations, than that Josephus is incorrect, in the interest which he gives to Pheroras and his wife, in the predictions of the Pharisees? -

If Josephus's account of the events connected with Herod's jealousy, and consequent cruelty, occasioned by a prophecy of another King of the Jews, who was to supersede him and his family, be, to a certain extent, involved in obscurity, the light of truth sufficiently breaks through his obscurity, to make him an evidence, confirmative of the truth of some of the events preceding the birth of

Christ, recorded by the evangelists. I will transcribe from Josephus the passage to which these remarks advert.

“ There was moreover a certain sect of Jews, who valued themselves highly for their exact knowledge of the law; and talking much of their interest with God, were greatly in favour with the women. They are called Pharisees, men who had it in their power to control kings; extremely subtle, and ready to attempt any thing against those whom they did not like. When, therefore, the whole Jewish nation took an oath to be faithful to Cæsar, and the interests of the King, these men, to the number of above six thousand, refused to swear. The King, having laid a fine upon them, Pheroras's wife paid the money for them. They, in requital for this her kindness (for they were supposed, by their great intimacy with God, to have attained to the gift of foreknowledge), foretold that God, having decreed to put an end to the government of Herod and his race, the kingdom would be transferred to her and Pheroras, and their children. Salome, who was ignorant of none of these things, came and told the King of them; and assured him, likewise, that many of the court were corrupted by them. Then the King put to death the most guilty of the Pharisees, and Bagoas the eunuch, and one Carus, the most beautiful young man about the court, and the great instrument in the King's unlawful pleasures. He likewise slew every

one in his own family, who adhered to those things which were said by the Pharisees. But Bagoas had been elevated by them, in that he should be called Father and Benefactor, the King, who was to be appointed according to their prediction, (for all things would be in his power), being to give him a capacity of marriage, and of having children of his own."<sup>4</sup>

I think, with Lardner, that the oath, of which Josephus here speaks, is the same with St. Luke's taxing, because it must have been taken about the same time. An oath to be faithful to Cæsar<sup>5</sup>, was

<sup>4</sup> Josephus Antiq. Book XVII. chap. iii. Lardner's Version. See Cred. Part I. Book II. c. i. § 2.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Priestley says, that Lardner "has not proved that this expression is equivalent to the taking of a census; and the most rational interpretation of it is, that it was an oath of friendship and alliance." That is, Dr. Priestley pronounces his own opinion the *most rational*: he might think so; but he should have left it for his readers to have made this discovery, from the strength of the reasoning by which it is supported. If the oath had been taken by Herod only, it might have been one of friendship and alliance to Augustus; but it is any thing but probable, that an oath, which was demanded of every individual in Herod's kingdom, was of this harmless complexion: it was, from Josephus's account of it, compulsory; and so offensive to the Jews, that six thousand of the Pharisees refused to take it, who were fined for their refusal. But Herod ruled the nation with so firm and strong an arm, that he quelled with ease turbulent and seditious spirits. Lardner has proved, that about the time this oath was taken, Herod was in disgrace with Augustus; neither does Dr. Priestley attempt to deny it. Lardner does not rest his argument on the expression of Josephus *only*, but *also* upon the circumstances with which the taking of the oath was connected. Further, this census was designed as a punishment of Herod, who was almost universally hated; neither was it carried into full effect, which sufficiently explains *the reason* of its not exciting more dissatisfaction among the Jews.—See Theol. Rep.

an acknowledgment of subjection to him, so was an enrolment in a Roman census; and in a census the people gave in an account of themselves, and of their estates, upon oath. Luke's taxing, or census, and Josephus's oath, are also each followed by corresponding events. The disturbance at Jerusalem, and the massacre of the infants at Bethlehem, of which Matthew speaks, were on account of a prediction which foretold a King of the Jews. On a similar account were the executions at Jerusalem, mentioned by Josephus. I cannot withhold from the reader the following judicious reflections of Lardner, on this singular coincidence between Josephus and the Sacred Records.

“ St. Matthew says, that ‘ when Herod saw that he was mocked of the wise men, he was *exceeding wroth*, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof.’ Josephus has given us the tokens of an uncommon rage in Herod. And though St. Matthew has related, upon this occasion, no other instance of Herod's cruelty, beside the orders for destroying the children in and near Bethlehem; yet nothing is more likely than that Herod, the most jealous of mortals, should, upon the retreat of the wise men, be filled with suspicions that the Scribes and Pharisees, whom he had lately consulted about

---

Vol. V. p. 91—93. Hist. of Early Opinions, Vol. IV. p. 125—127. Pope on the Miraculous Conception, pp. 209, 210. And Lardner's Cred. Part I. Book II. cap. i. § 2.

the birth-place of the King of the Jews, had been accessory to the disappointment he had met with from the said wise men: and that, being heated by the insinuations of his sister Salome, and by the barbarous counsels of his son Antipater, now in Judea, and in high favour, he should then make also that cruel ravage in his court, and at Jerusalem, of which our Jewish historian has given us a summary account.”<sup>6</sup>

Let us now take a summary view of the evidence of Josephus. The exact coincidence in point of time, and the accordance between the main facts themselves; such as the oath of fidelity, taken by all the Jewish nation, with the census, mentioned by Luke;—the alarm excited in the breast of Herod, by prophecies of a King of the Jews, who was to be invested with supernatural powers (a circumstance which designates the Messiah expected by the Jews);—the jealousy and rage of Herod, which vented itself, in a most cruel manner, upon those who had excited this alarm, with the facts recorded by Matthew; fully justify, in my opinion, our considering Josephus as an evidence, though an unintentional evidence, in favour of the evangelical accounts of the events succeeding the birth of our Saviour. Josephus mentions the executions at Jerusalem, Matthew the murder of the infants at Bethlehem. Independent of the reasons

---

<sup>6</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part I. Book II. chap. i. § 2, Vol. II. pp. 637, 638.

already assigned for the omission of the latter fact by Josephus, his work being a political history of the Jewish nation, the executions in the capital, and at the court, might come more within his design; whereas, Matthew gives the history of Jesus, and therefore only notices the attempt made upon his life by Herod.

To conclude: if Josephus had preserved a determined silence on all the events connected with the birth of Christ, his silence would be no objection to the authenticity of the narratives in Matthew and Luke. "Omission is," as Paley justly observes, "at all times a very uncertain ground of objection;" and this remark applies, with accumulated force, when the omission occurs in an author who is prejudiced, and who is convicted of omissions on other occasions.

Macrobius, a heathen author of the fourth century, has a passage, which shows that the slaughter of the infants by Herod had reached his ears. "When he [Augustus] had heard that, among the children within two years of age, which Herod, King of the Jews, commanded to be slain in Syria, his own son had been killed, he said: 'It is better to be Herod's hog than his son.'"<sup>7</sup>

This passage deserves notice, notwithstanding the lateness of the date at which it was written; because Macrobius was a bigoted heathen, and

---

<sup>7</sup> Macrob. Sat. lib. ii. c. 4. and Lardner's Cred. Part I. Book II. chap. ii. § 2, Vol. II. p. 762.



cannot therefore be suspected of any design to confirm the truth of the Sacred Records. Neither is it likely that he had much acquaintance with Christian writers: this makes it probable that he transcribed what he relates from some more ancient heathen author, now lost. The passage may, at least, be considered as a proof that Herod's slaughter of the infants "was not," to adopt the words of Lardner, "then contested; and that it was even better known than the fate of those sons of Herod, whom, Josephus says, he put to death at man's estate."

From the foregoing statement, it will appear, *that some expectations were excited, by the extraordinary events* recorded by the evangelists. That these expectations should soon subside, is accounted for by Joseph's secret flight into Egypt; by his residence, after his return, being at Nazareth, a town remote from Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Archelaus, Herod's successor, and the principal men of the Jews, might reasonably conclude, that the child sought after by Herod had fallen a victim to his jealousy; and when the object was supposed not to exist, it can excite no surprise that the public expectations respecting it should cease.

But, "it is highly improbable that no allusion should have been made to these extraordinary events in any other passage of the Sacred Writings;" or, as this objection is expressed by one of the Editors on another occasion, "How comes it to pass that

no mention is made of these wonderful events, nor the least reference or appeal to them, either by Jesus himself, in the course of his ministry, or by the evangelists and apostles, in their histories and epistles?"<sup>8</sup>

This question may be answered by another: How comes it to pass that Jesus "charged his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus, the Christ?" (Matt. xvi. 20);—that he prohibited the devils, whom he cast out, from declaring who he was? (Mark i, 34). If our Saviour did not think proper, during his personal ministry on earth, either himself to declare, or to permit his disciples to declare, publicly, that he was the Christ, how unreasonable and absurd is it to object to the accounts of the miraculous conception, that Jesus has not appealed to that circumstance, during his ministry, as proof of his divine mission; especially if, as an Unitarian writer remarks, "a circumstance of that kind could not be used as a proof of any thing, being in itself the most difficult of all facts to prove, and of too private and dubious a nature to be brought into evidence, resting for its certainty on the testimony of a female, who, from the nature of the circumstance, would be liable to suspicion."<sup>9</sup>

Though these observations are not quite correct<sup>10</sup>,

<sup>8</sup> Letters on Arianism, by T. Belsham, p. 69.

<sup>9</sup> Wright on the Miraculous Conception, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> I say, not quite correct; because, if we admit the truth of the

yet they are sufficiently correct to show, that the miraculous conception must itself be first believed upon evidence appearing sufficient to establish its truth, before it can be appealed to as proof of any thing; which presupposes a reliance on the veracity of Christ and his apostles, produced by anterior evidence; consequently, by this anterior evidence, the unconverted Jew or Gentile must have their prejudices against Christianity removed, before they would be prepared to receive the evidence, upon which alone the account of the miraculous conception can be believed.

Thus, according to the Unitarian's own shewing, to expect that the miraculous conception should be appealed to as evidence, whether in the Gospels, or in the Acts of the Apostles, as the Editors of the Improved Version, and Mr. Belsham<sup>11</sup>, demand,

---

narratives in which this fact is recorded, its certainty was not permitted to rest solely on the testimony of Mary herself; but was communicated, by divine revelation, to Joseph, her betrothed husband, if it were not also communicated through the same medium to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and to Simeon and Anna. See Matt. i. 20. Luke i. 41—45, ii. 25—38.

<sup>11</sup> Mr. Belsham admits that our Lord avoided "an explicit declaration that he was the Messiah; which," adds Mr. B. "he generally declined, during his personal ministry." *Calm Inquiry*, 2d ed. p. 252. —When Mr. Belsham wrote his *Letters on Arianism*, he must have overlooked this fact; a fact which may be deduced from various passages in the Gospels, which shew, that where Christ's miracles and doctrines did not produce their proper effect on the minds of his audience, he did not choose to gratify an idle curiosity, by explicitly declaring who he was: much less would he refer to transactions that took place above thirty years before, and which could not be recited without an explicit confession that he was the Messiah. —I say, this fact must have been overlooked by

is unreasonably to reverse the order of evidence. Objections so untenable, on the Unitarian's own principles, only evince a predetermination to impugn, from the Sacred Volume, the accounts of the miraculous conception, and birth of Christ.

In the latter part of his question, Mr. Belsham assumes the very point at issue; two of the evangelists, and one of them an apostle, having mentioned some of the extraordinary circumstances that preceded and succeeded the birth of Christ. The substantial coincidence, under circumstantial variety, between the two evangelists, has been already noticed, and it is not an unimportant corroboration of the genuineness of their narratives. If the other two evangelists do not enter into a description of the events preceding, and immediately succeeding the birth of Christ, their description of the origin and nature of their Lord and Master confirms the account of the miraculous manner of his birth.

In memoirs, or biography, it is usual to give some information of the descent of the subject of the memoir: this has not been neglected either by Mark or John. The former introduces his Gospel with these words: "The beginning of

---

Mr. Belsham, when, in his Letters on Arianism, he asks, "How comes it to pass that no mention is made of these wonderful events, nor the least reference or appeal to them by Jesus himself in the course of his ministry?" The inconsistency of these observations it is unnecessary to point out.

the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." They are laconic, but very appropriate. At his baptism and transfiguration, Christ is declared to be the Son of God, by a voice from heaven; (Mark i. 11, ix. 7.) Afterwards, Christ, in a parable, describes himself as the Son of God; (chap. xii. 6, 7.) And it was for assuming this appellation, (Mark xiv. 61—64,) that he was adjudged guilty of blasphemy, and as such delivered to Pilate for punishment.

St. John's Gospel speaks the same language; the beginning of it merits our particular attention. "In the beginning," says the apostle, "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.—That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.—And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory<sup>12</sup>, the glory as of the only-begotten of the

---

<sup>12</sup> John most probably alludes to the glory of Christ at his transfiguration on the Mount, of which, he, James, and Peter, were selected to be witnesses. Peter adverts to the same event, in his Second Epistle, chap. i. ver. 17, 18. The Editors of the Improved Version interpret this passage of John, with their usual bias, to resolve into metaphor every Scripture which exalts the nature and dignity of Christ.

Father,) full of grace and truth.—No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

John wrote his Gospel after the other evangelists, having, as we are informed, previously seen and approved of their Gospels, and designing what he wrote as a kind of supplement to them, to counteract the errors which had been propagated by Cerinthus and the Gnostics. This view of the apostle's object accounts for the fact, that his Gospel contains much matter not to be found in the other Gospels, and for its omission of many things already recorded in them, without any impeachment of the veracity of either. Matthew and Luke give an account of the miraculous conception of Christ, but simply relate the fact, without much doctrinal explanation. John's proem to his Gospel reflects light on that fact, and on the appellation peculiarly applied to Christ consequent on that fact, by asserting the pre-existence of Christ as the *Λόγος*, or Word, by whom all things were created; that this Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; that he was the only-begotten of the Father; and afterwards, in chap. iii. 18, John places all in a state of condemnation, who do not believe in Christ as the only-begotten Son of God; and expressly declares his motive for writing his Gospel to be, “that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye may have life

through his name." John xx. 31. In the Acts of the Apostles, it appears, that Jesus was preached that he is the Son of God. In the Epistles, the same object is evinced: they not only repeatedly speak of God as the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and represent Christ as the Son of God, but enforce this belief as necessary to constitute a true believer in Christ. The apostles write as persons who had no fear that they could too highly exalt Christ as the Son of God; they unite him with the Father in most, if not all, of their benedictions and doxologies. Indeed, from an attentive and impartial perusal of the several books of the New Testament, it will appear, that the modern Unitarians cannot evince more zeal to prove that Christ was a mere man, the son of Joseph, by natural procreation, peccable and fallible, like other men, than the apostles did to inculcate the belief, that Christ was the Son of God. This direct opposition between the design of the Unitarian and Apostolical writings, is too obvious to be explained away by all the concentrated force of Unitarian talent. No; the apostolic epistles, and the evangelical accounts, of the pre-existence, birth, ministry, and propitiatory sufferings and death of Christ, reflect light on each other, and place in the clearest point of view the truth of that grand doctrine of the Gospel dispensation, which was, in the apostolic age, a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the wise Greek;

and which is, by their Unitarian successors of the present age, considered as the greatest obstacle to the reception of Christianity by the rational and philosophical inquirer after truth.

I must now vindicate the orthodox interpretation of the Scriptures, to which I have been appealing, from the objections which are made to it by the Unitarian<sup>13</sup>, that I may avoid the charge of over-looking arguments which I cannot refute.

---

<sup>13</sup> I cannot withhold from the reader some excellent strictures of Dr. Magee, on the attempt of Unitarians to divert words and phrases from their established and obvious sense, when such sense is unfavourable to their theological dogmas. After a quotation from Mosheim, Dr. Magee proceeds, "To mention a single canon of those laid down for the interpretation of Scripture, by modern Unitarians, will abundantly justify the application to them, of the observations of Mosheim upon their Socinian forerunners.—'Impartial and sincere inquirers after truth, must be particularly upon their guard against what is called the *natural signification* of words and phrases.' (Calm Inquiry, pp. 4, 5.) By the *natural signification* of words, is not here understood a signification of words established by *nature*, against which (as it is known not to exist) no person needs to be put upon his guard; but simply that signification which has been established by continued usage, by the true '*jus et norma loquendi*;' in other words, that signification which a thorough knowledge of the language attributes to the words. This is the signification of words, against which the Unitarian, in the person of Mr. *Belsham*, the promulgator of the above canon, would guard the reader and interpreter of Scripture; and this, on the ground, that 'the connexion between words and ideas is perfectly arbitrary.' The misfortune of a little knowledge is, that the phrases of a science are used without a perception of their import. Locke and other metaphysicians have said, that the connexion between words and ideas is not a *natural* but an *arbitrary* connexion. And, in the sense in which they intend it, they have said truly: namely, that sounds, being indifferent in their nature, the signification of words must be the result of an *originally arbitrary imposition*. But the connexion of words and ideas being conventional, when once established, it is so far from being arbitrary, that nothing



No part of the New Testament has more called forth the various forms of Unitarian criticism, than the proem to John's Gospel: and we need look no further than to the notes of the Editors of the Improved Version, on this proem, for proof of the perplexity and embarrassment in which it involves them. The Editors admit, that the WORD, [Λόγος] John i. 1, is applied personally to Christ, and observe that "the same title is given to Christ, Luke i. 2." The consequence of this admission the Editors endeavour to avoid, by representing ἀρχὴ, *beginning*, as not referring to the creation of the world, but only to the beginning of Christ's ministry, because, say they, this word is used with reference to this last period in other parts of the writings of this evangelist, and of the New Testament. Of the passages referred to by the Editors, to support their exposition of John i. 1, the word in John xv. 27, refers, no doubt, to the beginning of Christ's ministry, *because the context so determines it*; and it probably, though not certainly,

---

is more out of the power of individuals to alter. As Locke remarks, 'even the great Augustus himself, in the possession of that power which ruled the world, acknowledged he could not make a new Latin word:—that is, says he, 'he could not *arbitrarily* appoint what idea any sound should be a sign of, in the mouth and common language of his subjects.' (Essay, Book III. c. 2.)—Not so the Unitarian metaphysicians. They have read somewhere, that 'the connexion between words and ideas is arbitrary,' and mistaking the true meaning of the position, they are enabled by their ignorance to accomplish what Augustus could not do by his power,—to give arbitrarily to words whatever signification they may choose."—*Maget on the Atonement*, Vol. II. Part II. Note to p. 465. See pp. 467, 468.

does in John vi. 64, 1 John ii. 7, and 2 John, ver. 6. The other passages in the Gospel of John, to which they refer (chaps. xvi. 14, ii. 24, and iii. 11) do not at all bear upon the question. There must be some error, as the word ἀρχή does not once occur in any of them. In Luke i. 2, it refers to the early events in the life of Christ. In Philip. iv. 15, it evidently, from the context, refers to the first preaching of the Gospel, by Paul, to the Philippians. In 2 Thess. ii. 13, it alludes, I think, to the creation of the world: the same sense, in other words, is conveyed by the apostle in Eph. i. 4. There is nothing in the context that points to the beginning of Christ's ministry. In Acts xi. 15, it refers to the day of Pentecost. That Matt. xix. 4, 8, xxiv. 21, Eph. iii. 9, Heb. i. 10, and 2 Pet. iii. 4, refer to the creation of the world, must be allowed by the Editors themselves; and 1 John i. 1, ii. 13, refer to the same epoch: John viii. 44, and 1 John iii. 8, probably refer to the first seduction of Adam by the devil, which introduced sin and death into the world. No doubt, the Unitarian's new canon, of rejecting the natural signification of words and phrases, enables him with ease to remove every obstacle, presented by the plainest language; but we appeal from his arbitrary decisions, to the obvious meaning of language, and to the common sense of the unprejudiced reader.

The Editors, having referred to 1 John i. 1, as proof that the evangelist only alludes to the

beginning of Christ's ministry, when he uses the word ἀρχὴ, as if by such reference they had established the import of this passage, I will, for the sake of the reader, assign my *reasons* for differing from them. It will, I presume, be allowed, even by the Editors themselves, that the manifestation of the WORD OF LIFE refers to the beginning of the ministry of Christ;—I should say, probably, farther back,—to his baptism by John, when he was, by a voice from heaven, publicly announced to be the Son of God. That Christ existed previously to this public proclamation of him as the Son of God, must be conceded by every one: the word ἀρχὴ, *beginning*, must therefore allude to some *memorable epoch* anterior to the commencement of Christ's ministry; that this epoch is the creation of the world, is clearly implied in the opening of the First Epistle of John, "That which was from the beginning—that ETERNAL LIFE (or Word of Life) which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;" and is more directly and unequivocally expressed in the proem to his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him," &c. It is so perfectly puerile, to say nothing of its incongruity with the context, to make the apostle inform his readers, that Christ existed from the beginning of his public ministry, that nothing but an attachment to hypothesis, and to the "technical phrases of a systematic theology,"

could put such an absurd construction upon the apostle's words.

From the foregoing review of the passages in the New Testament, in which the word *beginning* occurs, it appears, that when it refers to the commencement of the ministry of Christ, it is because the context so determines it; and that, unless limited by the context, it refers to the beginning of the creation, as in Matth. xix. 8, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 1 John i. 1, and ii. 14.

Let us next consider how the Editors' interpretation of the word ἀρχὴ agrees with the context. They say, that, by the word *beginning*, the evangelist does not allude to the creation, but to the beginning of the ministry of Christ; that is, that Christ was from the commencement of the ministry of Christ<sup>14</sup>; that Christ was with God, by withdrawing "from the world, to commune with God, and to receive divine instructions and qualifications, *previously* to his public ministry." Thus, by a sort of legerdemain, the word *beginning* is made to allude, at the same time, to two different periods. Where, in the New Testament, do the Editors read that Christ "withdrew from the world, to commune with God, and to receive divine instructions and qualifications, *previously* to his public

---

<sup>14</sup> So said Marcion, and with some consistency; because, according to him, Christ did not in reality assume human nature, but only appeared as a man; and that immediately upon his appearance as such, he began his ministry.—Have the Editors borrowed their interpretation of the poem to John's Gospel from Marcion?

ministry?" "As Moses was with God," say they, "in the mount (Exod. xxxiv. 28), so was Christ, in the wilderness, or elsewhere, to be instructed and disciplined for his high and important office."

Do these Editors seriously mean to rest the proof of their fanciful hypothesis upon the evangelical accounts of Christ's temptation in the wilderness? Let us examine the validity of their proof by the accounts themselves. Matthew says (iv. 1), "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil;" and records the conversation between our Saviour and the devil. Mark says (i. 13), "And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan." Luke says the same (iv. 2); and adds the discourse that took place between our Saviour and Satan, with whom only he appears to have had any converse, till angels ministered to him. Thus, according to these Editors, when the evangelist says, "The Word was in the beginning, with God;" he means, that Christ withdrew from the world, into the wilderness, to be tried and tempted by Satan, which they represent as implying his having communion with God. Did such nonsense ever escape the pen of commentator before? Somewhat conscious of this absurdity, the Editors have endeavoured to reserve to themselves a retreat, if closely pressed, by the addition of the vague expression, *or elsewhere*, after the word wilderness; but nothing short of their new canon,

by which they reject the natural signification of words, can extricate them from the strait.

The whole of the context of John i. 1—18, is decisive against referring the word ἀρχὴ<sup>15</sup>, to the beginning of the ministry of Christ; but before I insist upon this, some notice must be taken of the Editors' criticism on the word ἐγένετο. In their Note on John i. 3, the Editors object to the common version, which is adopted by Newcome, and "who explains it of the creation of the visible material world." "But this," say they, with their usual modesty, "is a sense which the word ἐγένετο will not admit. Γίνομαι occurs upwards of seven hundred times in the New Testament, but never in the sense of *create*. It signifies, in this Gospel, where it occurs fifty-three times, to be, to come, to become, to come to pass; also to be done or transacted, chap. xv. 7, xix. 36."

This might be true; and yet ἐγένετο admit of the sense attached to it by Newcome, in John i. 3. But how is the fact? Γίνομαι occurs in Mark ii. 27, Phil. ii. 7, Heb. iv. 3, xi. 3, James iii. 9, in the

---

<sup>15</sup> In Micah v. 2, an acknowledged prophecy of Christ, the LXX. have Καὶ ἐξοδοὶ αὐτοῦ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἀπ' αἰῶνος; that is, literally, "and his goings forth have been from the beginning, from everlasting," as it is in the Geneva Version. In this passage of Micah, ἀρχῆς cannot refer to the beginning of Christ's ministry. Of the Septuagint Version of this passage, and of Gen. i. 1, where ἀρχὴ points to the creation of the world, John could not be ignorant, when he wrote his Gospel; consequently, when writing on the same subject, and in the same language, he must be understood in the same sense, which is also the sense given to the poem by all the ancient Greek writers.

sense of, *to be made*. Of these passages, all but that in Heb. xi. 3, are translated by the Editors in the sense adopted by Newcome. That ἐγένετο occurs very frequently in the New Testament, in other senses, will not be disputed; neither does this examination of passages, in which it will be admitted not to mean create, assist us to the true sense of John i. 1 to 3. It would have been much more to the point, if the Editors had *proved*, instead of *asserted*, that ἐγένετο never bears the sense of *create*; but it is not only used in this sense in the New Testament, but by the early Christian fathers. Thus Justin Martyr has, Δι' οὗ οὐρανὸς καὶ γῆ καὶ πᾶσα ἐγένετο κτίσις, "By whom heaven and earth, and the whole creation (or every creature), was made." It has also been justly observed, that Justin, Athenagoras, Irenæus, and others, actually inferred that the world was created by the Son of God, from the proem to John's Gospel.<sup>16</sup> This appeal to plain matter of fact, is called, by B., "a pompous appeal to Justin Martyr, and other writers of the 'orthodox primitive church;'" by which "he proves," says B., "what nobody ever disputed, that these orthodox fathers used the word γίνομαι in an improper sense, and that they misunderstood the evangelist."<sup>17</sup> Will the Editors, or their advocate, assert that Plato, Aristophanes, and Aristotle, used γίνομαι

<sup>16</sup> Quarterly Review, Vol. I. p. 332.

<sup>17</sup> Monthly Repository, Vol. IV. p. 378.

in an improper sense? For these Greek authors have used it in the sense of *create*.—See Animadversions on the Improved Version, by a Student in Divinity; in which (p. 69) a passage is quoted from Plato Tim. p. 1048, ed. Ficin.; from Plato Soph., p. 1183, ed. Ficin.; also from Aristoph. Av. 702: in all which γίνομαι is used to express *creation*.

After this, would the reader believe that B. is angry with the Quarterly Reviewer, because he understands the Editors to mean what they say, when they assert, without any reserve, that “the word ἐγένετο never bears the sense of *create*?” Does not B. say the same, when he accuses the orthodox fathers of using it in an improper sense?

If the Greek orthodox fathers have used the word γίνομαι in an improper sense, so have the Greek heathen authors. If the Greek orthodox fathers misunderstood the evangelist, so have Lardner, Priestley, Lindsey, Wakefield, and Evanson, whose orthodox prejudices would not bias their Greek criticisms: so have Parkhurst, Michaelis, Marsh, Newcome, and every Greek scholar, of any repute, every one of whom would have denied that the Greek orthodox fathers used the word γίνομαι in an improper sense, had such an opinion been proposed for their consideration; but little did these critics anticipate that a charge, like the present, of incompetency in the knowledge of the Greek, would be preferred against men, who not only



wrote, but spoke and thought in that language; and some, if not all of them, ranked among the learned of the age in which they wrote.

Thus, whether we turn to the ancient Greek writers, Christian or heathen,—to the Greek critics, heterodox or orthodox,—or even to the Improved Version itself, we find that they give to *γίνομαι* the sense of creation. The Editors' translation of John i. 10, must therefore be considered as an Unitarian gloss, to divest it of its obvious meaning. The passage in Matt. xxiii. 15, to which they refer, will not justify them in understanding *πεφωτισμένοι*, *enlightened*, after *ἐγένετο*, in John i. 10: the two passages are not parallel, as will appear, at first sight, by comparing them with each other. It also deserves notice, that *γένηται*, in the passage in Matthew, implies an entrance into a new state, as translated by the Editors;—which construction supports Archbishop Newcome's translation of the same verb, in the same sense, in John i. 14;—in which sense the Editors acknowledge it is adopted by Lindsey, Lardner, Priestley, and Wakefield;—but which, nevertheless, they reject, because, say they, “the most usual meaning of *γίνομαι* is, To be.” If this bold unauthorised assertion were correct, how came Wakefield, who is held up to our view, by the Unitarians, as “one of the first scholars of this age,” to err so egregiously, as to give to *γίνομαι* a sense, which, say our Editors, it never bears, and therefore is *inadmissible*? It

cannot be said that his critical judgment was warped by his orthodox prejudices. But to whom am I appealing? To men, who evince a predestination to sacrifice all legitimate criticism and common sense, to their philosophical and theological dogmas.

The Editors' criticisms on the word *ἔγενετο* having been proved to have no other foundation, than their desire to divest the proem to John's Gospel of its plain obvious meaning; let us take a summary view of the contents of this proem:—"In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made by him. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." The Word was not only with God, but was God, by whom all things were created, and *without him was not* any thing made that was made. The repetition is emphatic, and evinces the evangelist's desire to impress on the minds of his readers the solemn truth he is inculcating, of the creation of all things by Christ, as the Word, who was in the *beginning* with God, before all creation; that is, from eternity. After carrying us back to the original of created things, the evangelist takes us

forward to the incarnation of the Word:—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He was in the world, and the world was made by him." Here is beauty and consistency. The Word must have existed before he became flesh, and dwelt in the world, which was created by him—he existed *ἐν ἀρχῇ*, *in the beginning*; that is, at the first of events which the human mind can conceive—the creation. To what can it be attributed, but to the prejudice of system, to the love of hypothesis, that the Editors should refer this expression to the commencement of Christ's ministry, as, upon their own principles, it would not be correct; Christ having been, as man, in existence thirty years previous to that period? To make the evangelist gravely inform his readers, that a Teacher, divinely commissioned from heaven, existed, when he began to publish his mission, is to make the evangelist trifle both with his readers and with his subject. No such trifling is chargeable on the apostle John; his subject is solemn and important, and he treats it as such. He informs us that the Eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, became man, for the salvation of a sinful world; that he is the life and light of men, that in him center all the blessings of the Gospel. The context shews that John uses the word *ἀρχῇ* in the same sense as it is used in Gen. i. 1, Mic. v. 2, Matt. xix. 4, Heb. i. 10, and other passages in the Scriptures.

The Editors' novel and fanciful interpretation of the proem to John's Gospel, has been adopted, I believe, by none but of the Socinian school; and even of this school, few are to be found, who have offered equal violence to the context of that proem, though they were sufficiently disposed to divest it of the testimony which it bears to the divinity of Christ. Indeed, the conflict of opinion between the Unitarians themselves, in their attempts to obstruct the stream of light which the Gospel of John throws on the divinity of the Saviour, serves the cause to which it is opposed.

One set of commentators admit that, by *the Word of God*, is to be understood God himself<sup>18</sup>. But though they concede so much, in deference to the express declaration of the evangelist, yet, by the Word, in the 14th verse, they only understand

---

<sup>18</sup> Wakefield, in his Note on John i. 1, after referring to the Jewish Targums, says,—“ Now will any man assert that these writers regarded *the Word of God* as a distinct being from God himself? I suppose not.” I also suppose not; at least not the orthodox believer in the Trinity—not a believer in the first Article of the Church of England, in which we read,—“ There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” Now, will any man assert that this authorised declaration of that Church's belief of the Trinity, describes the Word, or Son, as a Being distinct from God himself? Does not this first Article describe him as of one substance, or being, with the Father; as one God, the Creator of all things, with the Father and Holy Spirit? Is it candid, is it honest, to insinuate, as Wakefield does in the above Note, that the Trinitarian believes in more Gods than one?

a portion of that wisdom<sup>19</sup> by which God created the world, "which dwelt or tabernacled"

<sup>19</sup> The late Bishop Horsley justly observes, "In the Socinian scheme, is it no difficulty that the capacity of a mere man should contain that wisdom, by which God made the universe? Whatever is meant by *the Word*, in St. John's Gospel, it is the same Word, of which the evangelist says, that all things were made by it, and that it was itself made flesh. If this Word be the divine attribute of wisdom, then that attribute, in the degree which was equal to the formation of the universe, in this view of the scripture doctrine, was conveyed entire into the mind of a mere man, the son of a Jewish carpenter. A much greater difficulty, in my apprehension, than any that is to be found in the catholic faith." In a Note, the Bishop subjoins, "In reply to this, Dr. Priestley says to me, in the thirteenth of his Second Letters, sect. 8, 'Pray, Sir, what Socinian ever maintained that the divine attribute, wisdom, in the degree which was equal to the formation of the universe, was conveyed into the mind of Jesus Christ?' I say, that St. John maintains it, if St. John was what Dr. Priestley believes him to have been, a Socinian. It is maintained in the beginning of St. John's Gospel, if the evangelist's words be expounded in the true sense by the Unitarians. The Word, which was with God from the beginning, according to St. John, was made flesh. If the Word, which was made flesh, was not the same Word which was in the beginning with God, by which all things were made, there is no meaning in the evangelist's words, literal or figurative. The Word being made flesh, according to the Socinians, was only a communication of the Word to the mind of Christ.—What was communicated to the mind of Christ? That Word, which was from the beginning, which made the world. Dr. Priestley says, this is more than the Unitarians believe. 'What they believe is, that a *portion* only of the same wisdom, which formed the universe, was communicated to the mind of Christ.' It may be so. Far be it from me to tax Dr. Priestley, or his brethren, with a larger faith than they profess. But if they believe no more than Dr. Priestley, in this passage, acknowledges, they believe much less than St. John asserts in the most reduced sense of his expressions."—See Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley, pp. 280, 281, edit. 1812.

The Editors and their advocate, Mr. Belsham, were not insensible to the discomfiture of Priestley. Though they would fain conceal it from the notice of the public, they acknowledge it in the most unequivocal manner, by not attempting to recover the post from which

in Christ. To give the *Logos*, or *Word*, a more restricted meaning in the fourteenth than in the first verse, is not warranted by the context. If the evangelist were only describing an attribute of the Deity, he would have selected language adapted to convey such an idea to the reader, and would not have attributed personality and personal acts to the *Logos*. *The Word* was not only *with God*, but *was God*. Lindsey gives this passage a different turn. He translates it, "God was Wisdom." This is inadmissible; as, in that case, the Greek would be *Kaì ó Θεός ἦν σοφία*, instead of *Kaì Θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος*. Wakefield has, "Wisdom was God;" making God the predicate of the proposition, as in the English authorised version. His substitution of *Wisdom* for *Word*, is without authority from the original Greek, and to be attributed to theological and not critical reasons. See his Notes on John i. 1.

---

Priestley was so victoriously driven by Horsley. They concede to the latter all he contends for in the above argument, by admitting that *the Word*, in John i. 1, and in ver. 14, both equally apply to Christ. Whether the new position they have taken, upon the demolition of the old one, from which Dr. Priestley was driven, will afford a safer defence for their heterodox notions, I shall leave to the judgment of the intelligent reader; to whom I would recommend an attentive perusal of the Tracts in Controversy between Horsley and Priestley, with Mr. Belsham's attack on the well-earned fame of the former. He will then see that the points which Mr. Belsham has separated from the general controversy, with a view to transfer the laurel of victory from the brow of Horsley to that of Priestley, may be compared to one or two outposts, which so little affect the main line of attack and defence, that if they were entirely given up, the strength of the main positions taken by Horsley would only be the more conspicuous.

Bishop Horsley has ably exposed the invalidity of the interpretation of these commentators. See the extract from him in the foregoing Note.

Another set of commentators, at the head of whom stand our Editors, admit that, by *the Word*, (John i. 1), Christ is to be understood; but, in order to extricate themselves from the dilemma into which this admission would otherwise place them, they deny that *the Word* was God<sup>20</sup>, the Creator

---

<sup>20</sup> The importance of the subject prevents any apology for presenting the reader with a critique, in the Eclectic Review, on the attempt of the Editors of the Improved Version, to evade the plain meaning of this text: and as the review of the Improved Version in that journal has been acknowledged, even by Unitarians, to be the best written, what it says may, perhaps, arrest the attention of the more candid among them.

"John i. 1, '— and the Word was a God.' We object to this rendering, that in the two or three passages in which the New Testament uses *θεός* in a metaphorical sense, that signification is marked by other words, with such a plenitude of caution, as to prevent any possible ambiguity. *Here* the context supplies no such corrective aid; and no Grecian would say that the plain construction implies or requires it. Had it been the evangelist's intention to convey that lower or generic sense, he could not have rejected various modes of exact expression, with which the language would have furnished him, and have adopted one which would necessarily lead to a total and capital misapprehension of his meaning. St. John's style is remarkable for extreme simplicity and perspicuity. He might have said, *θεῶν τις* (as Plato Apol. Socr. 19); or even *θεός τις* or *θεῖος*. The Editors, in their Note, glance, with a wishful eye, at the late Mr. Cappe's translation, though it would make the words false Greek; and the violent conjecture of Samuel Crellius, which, against the faith of criticism, they dignify with the epithet 'plausible.' These weak attempts are, in effect, acts of homage to the justness of the common version, 'The Word was God.'"—See Eclectic Review, Vol. V. p. 355.

In corroboration of the justness of this critique, we may add the testimony of the Emperor Julian, who flourished the latter end of

of all things : the arguments, by which they support their interpretation of the proem to John's Gospel, have been already noticed.

A third commentator<sup>21</sup>, not less daring than any of the preceding, conscious of the inefficacy of every attempt to evade the obvious import, not only

the fourth century. Adverting to John i. 1, he says:—"John has presumed to call Christ God." In this sense, this phrase was understood by all the Greek fathers.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Evanson; who, in his *Dissonance of the Four Evangelists*, says:—"The supposed John begins with representing him [Christ] as the Divine Logos of Plato, under an human form, dwelling amongst men, and repeatedly represents him as omniscient—and never to acknowledge any other father but God." This last observation is correct, and might have been extended to all the other evangelists; it claims the most serious attention of those who entertain doubts of the authenticity of the accounts of the miraculous conception, as being a confirmation of the truth of those accounts, which may have escaped their notice. But Evanson might, with equal truth, and with more plausibility, have asserted that the evangelist borrowed his Logos from the Chaldee Targums. The charge of Platonism against John's Gospel is about as well founded as the reason assigned by Volney for the prevalence of the belief of one God, which he represents to be a corruption of Polytheism, and Polytheism a corruption of the deification of the powers of nature. Whether the evangelist was as well acquainted with the Platonic philosophy, as Evanson asserts he was, or whether he was not,—that he was acquainted with the Gnostic heresy, appears from his *General Epistle*, as well as from the proem to his Gospel; in both some of their tenets are controverted. But without referring either to the Platonic or Gnostic philosophy, the evangelist's adoption of the phrase Logos, to designate the Son of God by, previous to his incarnation, meets with sufficient explanation from the phraseology of the Jews themselves.—See the *British Critic* for 1812, Vol. XXXIX. pp. 33, 34, 37, 38. On the design of the proem to John's Gospel, and on the charge of Platonism against the doctrine of the Trinity, the reader may, with advantage, consult Marsh's *Michaelis*, Vol. III. p. 278, &c. Horsley's *Tracts against Priestley*, Letters XII. and XIII. p. 228 to 269.



of the first chapter, but of other parts of the Gospel of John, cuts the knot he cannot untie, by rejecting the Gospel of John as spurious and of no authority. If there be more hardihood, there is perhaps less dishonesty, in this method of getting rid of the testimony of John, than in that which offers violence to common sense and the plainest language.

Thus, whichever way we direct our view, the literal sense, which is the only consistent and rational sense of the proem to John's Gospel, meets with confirmation, if such confirmation were wanting, from the very opponents of the all-important doctrine it inculcates. Wakefield and other Unitarians say, that *the Word*, John i. 1, was really God, by whom all things were created. Mr. Belsham, and the Editors of the Improved Version, say, that *the Word* was Christ himself. Evanson says that, according to the Gospel of John, Christ was the Divine Logos, in an human form, dwelling amongst men. Collect these several interpretations, give them consistency, and you have the orthodox interpretation of the proem to John's Gospel.

## CHAP. VII.

*The Phrase, Son of God, applied to Christ, on account of the Miraculous Nature of his Birth—Examination of the Attempt of the Editors of the Improved Version to prove that St. John uses μονογενής, Only-begotten, metonymically for ἀγαπητός, Beloved—St. John, in his Gospels and Epistles, condemns the Opinions held by the Cerinthians and Docetæ, who equally rejected the Miraculous Nature of the Birth of Christ—The Word μονογενής, Only-begotten, not more “gross and improper” in English, than in Greek—The Phrase, Son of God, applied to Christ, in Rom. i. 4. viii. 3, and Gal. iv. 4, with reference to the Miraculous Conception—Examination of the Notes of the Editors of the Improved Version, on these several Texts—Joseph not uniformly spoken of as the Son of Joseph and Mary, as the Editors assert—Our Lord’s being called Jesus of Nazareth, consistent with the Evangelical Accounts of his Birth at Bethlehem—Concluding Remarks on the Phrase, Son of God.*

THE Unitarian denies that by the phrase, *Son of God*, as applied to Christ, any idea of deity,—any peculiar derivation from God,—any thing that would invest him with a nature superior to other men, is to be understood<sup>1</sup>. After he has thus peremptorily, as from his theological chair,

---

<sup>1</sup> See Belsham’s *Calm Inquiry*, p. 166, 2d edit.

stripped the phrase of every meaning that would make Christ other than a fallible, peccable, frail man; he denies that the application of it to Christ, by the Sacred Writers, has any allusion to his miraculous conception, or is confirmatory of the accounts of the same.

It is evident that this question must be determined, not by the hardy assertions of one party in the controversy, but by a reference to the analogy of Scripture, and to the acknowledged principles of interpretation; both of which we shall find to be irreconcilably opposed to this dogma of the Socinians.

A reason is assigned by the angel, Luke i. 35, why Christ should be called the Son of God, a reason directly opposed to those which the Unitarians assign: but as this passage is in one of the disputed chapters, I shall, for the present, wave the testimony it bears, and appeal to those passages of Scripture, the genuineness of which is not disputed by the Editors of the Improved Version.

The apostle John survived all the other apostles; consequently, he had more opportunity of witnessing the attempts of the Gnostics to ingraft on Christianity their wild and visionary notions. These attempts he opposes<sup>2</sup>; in doing which he combats

---

<sup>2</sup> The Editors' translation of *καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος*, and the *Word was a God*, is not only unsupported by the original, as it has been before shown, but it makes the evangelist advance a position of the

opposite errors, the one denying that Jesus was the Son of God, the other denying that he really took on him the nature of man; hence the two important points, that Jesus was really the Son of God, and that he became flesh, that is, took on him the real nature, and not the shadowy resemblance, of man, are emphatically enforced in his Gospel and First Epistle. The apostle describes Christ to be the Son of God in language so explicit, that the Unitarian is deprived of his refuge in the indefinite article:<sup>3</sup> “No man hath seen God at any time; the *only-begotten* Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” John i. 18.

On the evangelist's application of the epithet *μονογενής*, *only-begotten*, to Christ, the Editors remark:—“This expression does not refer to any peculiar mode of derivation of existence, but is used to express merely a higher degree of affection. It is applied to Isaac, Heb. xi. 17, though Abraham had other sons. The same word in the Hebrew is translated indifferently *μονογενής* and *ἀγαπητός*.

---

Gnostics, whose tenets he was opposing; for they taught that the Word was an *Æon*, and therefore a God in a subordinate sense. Hence Michaelis observes, on John i. 1, “the expression God must here be taken in its highest sense.” The Editors' version is, indeed, in opposition to every rule that should govern the critic or the expositor.

<sup>3</sup> For the arbitrary manner in which the Editors have prefixed the indefinite article before the phrase *Son of God*, See Magee on the Atonement, 4th edit. Vol. II. Part II. p. 482—515. Those who would justly appreciate the merit of the Editors of the Improved Version, as Greek critics, and as theologians, may with advantage consult this justly celebrated work.

This word is applied to Christ by the evangelist John, four times in the Gospel, and once in his Epistle; and by no other writer of the New Testament. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, it unquestionably signifies beloved, or most beloved; and in this sense it is used by John, chap. i. 14, 18; iii. 16, 18; 1 John iv. 9. 'He seems to adopt it,' says Mr. Lindsey (Seq. p. 139), 'on all occasions where the other Sacred Writers would have said ἀγαπητός.' Compare Matt. iii. 17, xvii. 5; Mark i. 11; ix. 7; xii. 6; Luke iii. 22; ix. 35. See Cappe, *ibid.* p. 94, and Grotius in *loc.* Mr. Lindsey observes, that 'only-begotten is most gross and improper language to be used in English, especially with respect to Deity.'—List of Wrong Translations, p. 46."

I will add to this Note, a passage containing observations on the same phrase from Mr. Belsham's *Calm Inquiry*, p. 259, 1st edit. "Observe," says he, "1st, That John is the only one of the Sacred Writers who applies the title, *only-begotten*, to Christ. 2d, That this word, in the original, properly signifies *an only child*. 3d, That it is often metonymically used to express *dearly beloved*. See Heb. xi. 17; and the same word, in the original Hebrew, which, by the LXX. is rendered μονογενής, only-begotten, is, in other passages, translated ἀγαπητός, beloved. Jer. vi. 26; Amos viii. 10. 4th, Hence it is probable that, as the title ἀγαπητός, beloved, does not occur in John, this writer uses

the word *μονογενής*, *only-begotten*, instead of it, where the other evangelists would have used *beloved*."

Let us now examine the argument of these two passages. The Editors refer to Heb. xi. 17, to prove that *μονογενής* does not, in the writings of the apostle John, relate to any peculiar mode of existence, but is used to express merely a higher degree of affection, because Abraham had other sons besides Isaac. If Abraham had sons by other wives, Isaac was his only son by Sarah, consequently, his only son in the line of the promise; and that *μονογενής* is used in this sense by the author of the Hebrews, appears by the context, ver. 19.<sup>4</sup>

But the same word in Hebrew is translated

---

<sup>4</sup> In Whiston's edition of Josephus's Antiquities of the Jews, Book XX. c. 2, we read: "He had, indeed, Monobazus, his elder brother, by Helena also, as he had other sons by other wives besides. Yet did he openly place all his affections on this his only-begotten son Izates." To this passage Mr. Whiston subjoins the following Note: "Josephus here uses the word *μονογενῆ*, an *only-begotten son*, for no other than one *best-beloved*, as does both the Old and New Testament; I mean, where there were one or more sons besides. Gen. xxii. 2, Heb. xi. 17." Mr. Whiston gives, first, a false construction of the passage in Josephus, and then, from that construction, draws a conclusion favourable to Unitarianism, not authorised by the Greek original. After having said, as above, that Monobazus had other sons besides Izates, Josephus proceeds: *τὴν μὲντοι πᾶσαν εὐνοίαν ΩΣ εἰς μονογενῆ τὸν Ἰζάτην ἔχων φανερός ἦν*, i. e. "He manifestly bestowed all his affections upon Izates, AS upon an only-begotten son." Josephus does not, as Mr. Whiston makes him, call Izates an only-begotten son, but only compares his father's affection for him to that which is felt for an only son.—For the observation in this Note, the Author is indebted to the Rev. Dr. Blomfield.

indifferently, *μονογενής* and *ἀγαπητός*; and the former word "is often metonymically used to express *dearly beloved*." Of the Scripture passages adduced by Mr. Belsham, to support this assertion, that in Heb. xi. 17, has been already considered. In the other two passages, Jer. vi. 26, Amos viii. 10, where the Hebrew word *Ichid* is rendered *ἀγαπητός*, is the author of the *Calm Inquiry* sure that *ἀγαπητός* is used in its primary sense? Is he certain that it is not used metonymically for *μονογενής*? Dr. Twells, who wrote a critical examination of the new text and version of the New Testament, which appeared in 1729, has made some remarks which will assist us to answer these questions: I shall therefore transcribe them.

"Upon John i. 14, the annotator observes that the word '*only-begotten*,' as here applied, conveys no idea to the mind, which is false; for it naturally conveys to the mind an *idea* of a *person*, who is the *Son* of the Father in a *peculiar sense*. He further tells us, that the correspondent Hebrew word, *Ichid*, is rendered by the LXX. *ἀγαπητός*, *beloved*; intimating that *μονογενής*, John i. 14, means no more than *beloved*, and therefore conveys no *idea* to the mind, of *Christ's* having a *peculiar* sonship: but herein he is certainly mistaken; for though *ἀγαπητός* literally signifies *beloved*, yet when it is spoken of a *Son*, it frequently, or rather *generally*, stands for *only-begotten*. For the truth of this, appeal may be made to lexicographers and

to scholiasts. Suidas expounds ἀγαπητός, by τὸ μονογενής. Hesychius, who is the standard of *Hellenistic* language, gives μονογενής as the prime equipollent expression to ἀγαπητός. *Julius Pollux*, lib. iii. c. 2, says, that an *only* son of his father or mother is called υἱὸς ἀγαπητός; and that *Hesiod* calls an *only* daughter, θυγατὴρ ἀγαπητή. Again: when Homer calls *Astyanax* the son of *Hector*, Ἐκτορίδην ἀγαπητόν, Il. Z. ver. 401, the Scholiast explains ἀγαπητόν by μονογενῆ. *Xenophon* and *Plutarch* so use the word; and Aristotle, Rhet. i. ventures to call the *one* eye of a person ὀφθαλμὸν ἀγαπητόν. Hence also probably it was, that the *Latin* version, used by Cyprian, lib. iii. Test. c. 15, gives us *Unicum*, for ἀγαπητόν of the LXX. Gen. xxii. 2. For so they there render *Ichid*, though our author erroneously gives us ἀγαπητόν in that place, as the rendering of *Aquila*, who really translates *Ichid*, μονογενῆ, as Symmachus does μόνον." He concludes his observations thus: "These two significations are promiscuously used by the *Jewish* and *Greek* writers. But though *Greek* writers express *only*, or *only-begotten*, by *beloved*, as has been abundantly shown; yet that either *Ichid* in *Hebrew*, or μονογενής in *Greek*, ever stands merely for *beloved*, no proof has yet been given. Grotius's instances in *Isaac* and *Solomon* are short of the purpose; for Isaac was the only son of Abraham, by Sarah; and Solomon (Prov. iv. 3) is said to be *Ichid*, LXX. ἀγαπώμενος,



of his *mother*, not of his *father*; and he was really *Bathsheba's* only surviving son. As to the instance of 1 Chron. xxix. 1, where Grotius supposes *David* calls *Solomon* his *only* son, there the Hebrew is *Achad*, not *Ichid*. But the LXX. never render *Achad* *μόνος*, or *μονογενής*; and here it has the force of *ἐξαίρετος*, preferably to all the rest. The *Syriac* and Arabic versions express *Achad* to the same effect; and our own version supposes such a sense. We have, therefore, reason to believe, that when St. John calls Christ the *only-begotten* of the Father, he designed to convey, to the minds of his readers, an idea of the Son's original; that he was the Son of God, in a peculiar sense, naturally, and therefore eternally begotten."<sup>5</sup>

This passage must have met the eye of the author of the *Calm Inquiry*, as it is in Nares's *Remarks on the Improved Version*, in which it is also observed, that "Leigh's *Critica Sacra*, under the term *ἀγαπητός*, is quite as strong to the purpose, and that carries us back to the year 1646." Why has he not either refuted it, or profited by it? The former, perhaps, he found would be no easy task; the latter, too humiliating to his literary importance, as the chief of his party. Or there might be policy in avoiding any notice of a work which he could not confute, that he might not introduce it to the notice of the Unitarian reader, and

---

<sup>5</sup> Nares's *Remarks on the Improved Version*, p. 176—178, 2d edit.

so expose to him the sandy foundation on which his hopes are built.

Whatever motive may have induced the silence of Mr. Belsham, and the Editors of the Improved Version, with respect to Nares's calm and argumentative reply to their Version, every friend to rational inquiry, every friend to legitimate criticism, will see from the evidence above adduced, (and which remains uncontroverted,) that no sufficient proof has yet been given, that either *Ichid* in Hebrew, or *μονογενής* in Greek, ever stands merely for *ἀγαπητός*, beloved. But, waving for the present this, as yet, unanswered refutation of the first branch of the Editors' criticism on *μονογενής*, let us examine the reasons assigned for the Editors' assertion, that John used that phrase only in the sense of *ἀγαπητός*, and not in its primary and literal sense.

The Editors say, that John seems to adopt *μονογενής*, "*on all occasions, where the other Sacred Writers would have used ἀγαπητός.*" In the Calm Inquiry, p. 259, it is asserted, "that as the word *ἀγαπητός*, beloved, does not occur in John<sup>6</sup>," that, therefore, "it is probable this writer

---

<sup>6</sup> In the second edition of the Calm Inquiry, p. 166, Mr. B. adds, in this place, "as a title, of Christ." This addition reduces the argument to a *petitio principii*, by taking for granted the point in dispute. It is, indeed, a tacit recantation of the assertion, "that *ἀγαπητός* does not occur in John." Is it then probable that John would, without having a specific object in view, apply an epithet to Christ, not so applied by the other evangelists, nor adopted by him on any other occasion?

uses the word *μονογενής*, *only-begotten*, instead of it, when the other evangelists would have used *beloved*." The Editors, for proof of the first of these assertions, refer to Matt. iii. 17, xvii. 5; Mark i. 11, ix. 7, xii. 6; Luke iii. 22, ix. 35. All these passages, except that in Mark xii. 6, mention the voice that came from heaven at the baptism of Christ, and at his transfiguration. The passage in Mark xii. 6, occurs in a parable of our Saviour. None of these events or discourses are recorded by John. So far then as the examples referred to by the Editors assist our investigation, John cannot be said to have adopted *μονογενής* "on all occasions, where the other Sacred Writers would have written *ἀγαπητός*," as none of these occasions, so far as the researches of the Editors extend, occur in his writings<sup>7</sup>. I say, so far as the researches of the Editors extend, because it is not true that *ἀγαπητός* never occurs in John: he not only uses it, but uses it on the same occasions as the other

---

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Belsham, in a Note, p. 167, of his *Calm Inquiry*, says:—"The word used at the baptism and transfiguration of Christ, was, probably, *יחיד*, which the evangelists, writing in Greek, would render, by one or other of the words used by the LXX. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, adopted *ἀγαπητός*, *beloved*. John renders it by *μονογενής*, *only-begotten*." Mr. Belsham's argument halts at every step. He begins with the *gratuitous assumption*, that *יחיד* was the word used at the baptism and transfiguration; and upon this *gratuitous assumption* he builds his argument. Next, his argument presupposes that John has, in his record of the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus, adopted the word *μονογενής*, where the other evangelists have used *ἀγαπητός*. The fact is, that no account, either of the baptism or transfiguration of Christ, is to be found in the Gospel of John; consequently, he has

Sacred Writers. Compare 3 John, ver. 1, with Philemon, verses 1, 2; and 1 John iii. 2, 21, iv. 1, 7, 11, 3 John, verses 2, 5, 11, with Heb. vi. 9, 1 Pet. ii. 11, and Jude, ver. 3, 17, 20. Thus, admitting that *μονογενής* may sometimes be metonymically used for *ἀγαπητός*, the reasons assigned for understanding *μονογενής* in this sense, where it occurs in the writings of the apostle John, are built upon false assumptions. But it does not appear that *μονογενής* is ever used metonymically for *ἀγαπητός*; on the contrary, it appears that where *ἀγαπητός* is applied to a child, it is to be understood metonymically for *μονογενής*, including, perhaps, the idea of the peculiar love felt for an only child; and this accounts for the same Hebrew word being translated indifferently *μονογενής* and *ἀγαπητός*, for example, Gen. xxii. 2, where the LXX. give *ἀγαπητόν*, and Aquila *μονογενῆ*.

We might therefore turn the argument of the Editors on themselves, and observe, that when *ἀγαπητός* is applied, by the Sacred Writers, to Christ, as the Son of God, it is to be understood metonymically for *μονογενής*, and refer to John's adoption of the latter phrase, for proof that he so

---

not recorded the word used on these occasions. This simple fact shakes to the foundation the whole of Mr. B.'s argument.—Again: whenever John evidently intends to convey the sense of *beloved*, he adopts *ἀγαπητός*, and he never uses *μονογενής*, but in a connexion which admits of its being understood in its literal meaning, and when it is a word of his own selection, as best adapted to convey his sentiments.

understood them. Is it therefore probable that John would, with the other Gospels before him, have substituted, for a term directly (in its primitive meaning) expressing the idea which he intended, another term, conveying, in its proper signification, another idea? Would not the apostle, by such an arbitrary adoption of terms, have needlessly involved his meaning in obscurity?

The Editors themselves, conscious perhaps of some defect in their arguments, supply us with a reason why *μονογενής* is not to be understood metonymically, as applied by John to Christ, when they say, "Mr. Lindsey observes (Sequel, p. 139), that it has been conjectured by interpreters of great note, that our apostle made choice of this word *μονογενής*, to confute the strange chimerical notions which some mystic Christians fell into very early," &c. The writings of the apostle John afford some foundation for these conjectures; for when the apostle describes Christ as the eternal *Word* of God, the fountain of all created intelligences, as *the only-begotten* of the Father, full of grace and truth, as the *light* and *life* of men; he overturns the Gnostic notions of different æons or intelligences issuing from the Supreme Deity, by appropriating exclusively to the *Word*, whom he describes as one God with the Father, the titles or qualities by which the Gnostics distinguished their æons from each other. He completes his confutation of the errors of the Gnostics, when he describes the

*Word* as becoming flesh, as taking on him the real nature of man; since in the denial of this last position, all the Gnostic sects agreed, however widely they might differ from each other on other points.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> It may be objected that the Cerinthians believed Jesus to be a real man, the son of Joseph and Mary. Granted: but they did not believe him to be Christ; they believed Christ to be an *æon*, who descended on and united himself to the man Jesus at his baptism, and left him and re-ascended to heaven, before his sufferings and death: they, therefore, equally with the Docetæ, denied that Christ really became man. The Docetæ did not, like the Cerinthians, divide Jesus and Christ into two distinct beings; they believed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, but affirmed, like Marcion afterwards, that he was a man in appearance only. When the apostle John says, "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God," (1 John iv. 2, 3); he condemns both these false opinions. When the apostle says, "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also," (chap. ii. 22, 23); he is not opposing the error of the Docetæ, which consisted in denying that Jesus Christ came in the flesh; but that of the Cerinthians, who denied that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, but believed him to be the son of Joseph and Mary. The Cerinthian heresy is also opposed in the following passage: "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." chap. iv. 9, 15. If we turn to 1 John i. 1, 2; v. 9 to 13, we recognize the same sentiments respecting the Divinity of Christ as in the Proem to the Gospel. Yet to this First Epistle of John, the Unitarian refers, as containing proof that the primitive Christians were Unitarians; that they believed Christ to be a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary. On this subject, the reader may consult Horsley's Tracts against Priestley, edit. 1812, p. 16 to 20, 118 to 129, 465 to 474. In which Horsley proves, that when the apostle John enforces a belief that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, he enforces a belief in the incarnation of Christ,

“Mr. Lindsey observes,” say the Editors, “that ‘only-begotten is most gross and improper language to be used in English, especially with respect to Deity.’ Human language is as inadequate to express, as the human mind is unequal to conceive, the nature and actions of the Deity. I see no peculiar grossness or impropriety in the word *only-begotten*, or that any greater impropriety attaches to it in English than in Greek. Equal impropriety attaches to the language of Psal. ii. 7; Acts xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5; v. 5. Who would discover any grossness in the apostle’s address to the Corinthians — “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel,” (1 Cor. iv. 15)? Or in his pathetic address to Philemon, “I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds,” (Philem. 10)? The real objection of the Unitarians to the word *only-begotten*, is neither its grossness nor its impropriety, but the opposition which its literal appropriation to Christ presents to their notions.

---

in opposition to the opinion of Priestley, that the apostle meant no more by that phrase, than that Christ was a man. Horsley’s arguments on this point remain unrefuted. The Unitarians are therefore called upon, by every principle of honour, by their professed regard to truth, and freedom of inquiry, to controvert and confute Horsley, before they reiterate Priestley’s opinion, and refer to his authority for the proof of it, as the Editors of the Improved Version have done, in their Note on 1 John iv. 2; from which Note, an indifferent reader would suppose that Dr. Priestley’s opinion was the generally received and undisputed opinion, not in the least suspecting that it had been controverted, much less that it had been victoriously overthrown.

The Unitarian being foiled in his attempt to evade the force of the apostle John's designation of Christ as the *only-begotten Son of God*; let us examine whether he succeeds better in his criticisms on the phrase *Son of God*, as applied to Christ by the Sacred Writers.

The apostle Paul thus begins his Epistle to the Romans: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Of this passage the Editors say: "The apostle could not mean, by this phraseology and the antithesis which he uses, to assert or countenance the strange and unintelligible notion of two natures in Christ; one the human nature, by which he was descended of David; the other a divine nature, by which he was the Son of God."

That is, the apostle could not mean what he has, in the clearest language, asserted, because the Editors think proper to pronounce such meaning strange and unintelligible. The philosophic Greek called the apostle Paul a babbler and setter-forth of strange Gods; the philosophic Unitarian accuses those who, through the exercise of a sound understanding and an honest mind, believe what the



apostle has recorded of *a plain matter of fact*, of being idolaters and setters-forth of strange Gods.

As the Editors will not allow the apostle to mean what he plainly says, let us consider what, according to them, ought to have been his meaning. "The sense of the passage," say they, "is plainly this; that Christ, by natural descent, was of the posterity of David, but that in a figurative sense, by the designation of the Holy Spirit at his baptism, he was the Son of God, or the promised Messiah, which was further proved by the extraordinary exertion of divine energy, in raising him from the dead."

The words of the apostle plainly point out Christ as the Son of David according to the flesh, or his human nature; and they as plainly point out Christ as the Son of God, according to the Spirit or his divine nature. The same word *κατὰ*, is used in the latter as in the former clause of the sentence: if therefore *κατὰ σάρκα*<sup>9</sup> is to be understood literally,

---

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Magee, among other excellent observations on the Editors' perversion of this passage, has the following:—"I am happy also, after all the flourish that the Editors have made about the impossibility of the contrast between the two natures in Christ being intended in this place by St. Paul, to have both themselves and their great supporters decidedly with me upon this point. For *σάρξ*, they tell us, in John i. 14, (where they are anxious to establish the proper humanity of our Lord) 'peculiarly stands for man as mortal.' Mr. Belsham, in his *Calm Inquiry*, (p. 227) says that 'this word applied to our Lord, in 1 Tim. iii. 16, means his being 'really and truly a man.' The same signification is given to the word by Dr. Carpenter, (*Unit. the Doct. &c.* pp. 64, 152, 185, 262), with the intimation also of a secondary meaning, marking emphatically 'the frailties of humanity.' How then must

κατὰ πνεῦμα must also be understood literally, or the antithesis is destroyed. As the Editors' explanation is the arbitrary product of their own imagination, so neither is it very perspicuous. When they say, "the sense is *plainly* this, that in a *figurative* sense, by designation of the Holy Spirit at his baptism, he was the Son of God;" are we to understand that Jesus was not the Son of God, till he was declared to be such by a voice from heaven at his baptism? Their words either convey this meaning, or none at all. A notion somewhat similar to this was entertained by some of the ancient Gnostic sects, to whom, perhaps, our Editors are indebted for their *figurative* sense. In the New Testament it is not to be found; the Sacred Writings are as silent respecting it, as respecting the philosophical system of Descartes. The words of the apostle, under consideration, contain no more allusion to any thing that occurred at the baptism of Christ, than to the appearance of the angels to the

---

these critics *consistently* render the words of St. Paul κατὰ σάρκα? Manifestly by the words, '*according to his human nature.*' And thus they establish the very contrast, which they explode as ridiculous: for then, his HOLY SPIRIT, in reference to which he was the Son of God, is put in direct opposition to his HUMAN NATURE, in reference to which he was the *Son of David*. Thus these profound critics, in their great anxiety to build up a sort of proof of the human nature of our Lord in one place, assist in fortifying the demonstration of his divine nature in another. The builders of Babel were visited, for *their impiety*, with a confusion of language, such that they could not 'understand one another's speech.' But there may be, it seems, a severer visitation: men may be made unable to understand their own.—'prius dementat.'" *Magee on the Atonement*, 4th edit. Vol. II. Part II. pp. 509, 510.

shepherds at the birth of Christ. Indeed the *figurative* sense given by the Editors to the latter clause of the above passage, in the Epistle to the Romans, is so devoid of support, either from the apostle himself, or from any other of the Sacred Writers,—is so entirely gratuitous, that a difficulty, of a peculiar kind, is created,—not the difficulty of refuting a serious argument of an opponent, but that of attempting to overthrow a position, unsupported even by the semblance of reasoning.

The Unitarian says, that the question concerning the person of Christ is an inquiry into a *plain matter of fact*. In the first chapter of Luke we read, that, in consequence of the conception of the Virgin Mary, through the Holy Spirit coming upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowing her, the holy child which should be born of her would be called the Son of God :<sup>10</sup> the Unitarian says, that this does not meet with confirmation from the other parts of the Sacred Records. The *plain matter of fact* is, that Jesus, at his baptism, and again at his transfiguration on the Mount, was declared, by a voice from heaven, to be *the Son of God*. The *plain matter of fact* is, that Christ, throughout his ministry, designated himself *the Son*

---

<sup>10</sup> For a luminous illustration of this declaration of the angel to the Virgin Mary, and for a triumphant answer to Mr. Belsham's objection to it, See Magee on the Atonement, 4th edit. Vol. II. Part II. Note, from p. 499 to 506. This Note is so replete with irrefragable argument, that nothing but its length prevents its entire insertion in this Work.

*of God*, though it subjected him to the charge of blasphemy, on which charge he was consigned over to the ignominious death of the cross. The *plain matter of fact* is, that Paul preached (Acts ix. 20) that Christ was *the Son of God*; that he enforces this fact throughout his epistles. In the passage immediately before us, in his Epistle to the Romans, he first introduces *Christ* as *the Son of God*, and then describes the difference between his human and divine nature; asserting that, as to the former, he is the Son of David; as to the latter, the Son of God; and that he is proved to be such by his resurrection from the dead.

Well, how do our Editors conduct this inquiry concerning a *plain matter of fact*? The history of the miraculous conception, which reveals the divine origin of our Lord, and constitutes him the Son of God, is, as we have seen, expunged by them from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as fabulous and of no authority. Having thus summarily disposed of these two important portions of the Sacred Records, which, if retained, sufficiently determine the import of other passages of Scripture which advert to the same fact, the evidence which these other passages afford to this *plain matter of fact*, is more easily disposed of, not by rejecting them from the Sacred Volume, they are too numerous to admit of so violent a measure; but by doing what, it is hoped, will answer the same purpose—that is, by converting these declarations

of a *matter of fact* into tropes, metaphors, and figures of speech.

To return to the Editors' comment on Rom. i. 3, 4. They attempt to support their figurative interpretation of the fourth verse, by stating the sense in which, they say, the title of the Son of God is applied to Christ in other parts of the New Testament: but they shall speak for themselves. "Christ is called the Son of God—because this title is equivalent to that of Messiah, and was so understood by the Jews, John i. 50. 'Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel. Compare Mark i. 1; Luke iv. 41; xxii. 67, 70.'" In reply to this remark it is to be observed, that sometimes the title Christ, or Messiah, sometimes the phrase *Son of God*, is applied to our Saviour by his disciples or followers, when expressing their belief in him. This is a fact which will not be disputed by any one who is conversant with the Sacred Writings. All that can be inferred from this fact is, that both these epithets are equally appropriate to our Saviour.

The Editors of the Improved Version plead, that the phrase *Son of God* is applied to Christ in a figurative sense, for otherwise it admits of a sense not favourable to their inquiry into a *plain matter of fact*. Let us now examine whether the Scriptures referred to by them justify this figurative sense. The first text, to which the Editors refer, is John i. 50, where Jesus, having told Nathaniel that he

saw him, when it appears from the context, he could not have seen him, as man, with his bodily eyes, produced from Nathaniel the confession cited in the note of the Editors, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." I look in vain in this passage for a proof of the Editors' position. There is nothing in it which obliges us to have recourse to a figurative sense. When Christ says, *I am the door, I am the vine*, the words necessarily lead us to a figurative meaning, as otherwise they would be nonsense; and this meaning is plainly pointed out by the context. No such necessity exists in the passage in John i. 50; neither the text nor context leads us to a figurative sense; and when such is the case, whether in the passage now under our consideration, or any other passage of Scripture, we may safely conclude that no figurative sense was intended by the writer.

To take such an arbitrary licence for a figurative interpretation of Scripture, as that which the Unitarian claims and exercises, is to lock up the meaning of the New Testament in a barbarous phraseology, in an unknown tongue, which defies all application of the acknowledged rules of criticism.

The remaining passages referred to by the Editors are, Mark i. 1, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," Luke iv. 41. "And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of God.'"

And he rebuked them, and suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was the Christ." Again, Ibid xxii. 67 to 70, " ' Art thou the Christ? Tell us.' And he said unto them, ' If I tell you, ye will not believe: and if I ask you, ye will not answer me nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God.' Then said they all, ' Art thou then the Son God?' And he said unto them, ' Ye say that I am.'" As little do these passages require the epithet of *the Son of God* to be understood in a figurative sense, as the passage from John i. 50. The passages in Mark i. 1, and Luke iv. 41, contain evidence opposed to the interpretation of the Editors. Mark very properly commences his memoir with a brief account of the origin of the subject of his memoir, and describes him as *the Son of God*. No, say the Editors, he only means that Jesus was the Christ; that is, in plain English, Mark i. 1 should be read, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Christ." Such is the luminous result of the Editors' departure from the obvious sense of Mark i. 1, that sense which makes it confirm the accounts given by Matthew and Luke of the superhuman origin of our Lord. Equally luminous is the result of their departure from the obvious sense of Luke iv. 41, where the devils say, "Thou art Christ, the Son of God." That is, according to the Editors, in plain English, *Thou art Christ, the Christ*.

On Luke xxii. 67 to 70, it may be observed, that Jesus declined answering in the affirmative to the question, *Art thou the Christ?* but to the second question, *Art thou then the Son of God?* he did not hesitate to answer in the affirmative. From the context therefore it appears, that the two epithets were not quite synonymous in the opinion of the Jews. But we have more decisive proof that the Jews did not consider these two epithets synonymous. Jesus had, on several occasions, explicitly declared himself to be the Son of God, and the Jews accused him of blasphemy, because they said he thereby made himself equal with God. (John v. 18.) Yet, after all this, they ask him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." (John x. 24.) It appears from these passages that the Jews considered our Lord's calling himself the Son of God equivalent to calling himself God; but that they did not consider this epithet to be convertible with that of the Christ, or Messiah. That the Jews thus understood this epithet, is further confirmed by their declaration to Pilate, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." (John xix. 7.) That the law here adverted to was the law against blasphemy, appears from our Lord's previous examination before the High Priest.

Thus we have the clearest proof that the Jews did not consider the title of the Son of God



equivalent to that of Messiah; that, according to the idiom of the language in which our Saviour conversed, the phrase *Son of God*, as applied to Christ, was understood by the Jews, according to its present popular acceptation, and not in the figurative sense which is assigned to it by the Editors of the Improved Version.

The anxiety of the Editors, to divest the Saviour of every title that may appear to approximate to Deity, has made them exhaust their stores of criticism, in order to evade the proper meaning of the epithet, *Son of God*. After their observations, in their Note on Rom. i. 4, already noticed, they proceed: "He is called a Son of God, as having been raised from the dead to an immortal life. In this sense Christ is called the first-born, having been the first human being who was put into possession of this glorious inheritance." Here, as before, is assertion without proof. When Christ is called, in Col. i. 18, "the first-born from the dead;"—in Rev. i. 5, "the first-begotten of the dead;"—or when, by another metaphor, he is called "the first-fruits of them that slept," 1 Cor. xv. 20, the meaning obviously is, that Christ was the first who rose from the dead; that in this, as in every other respect, he had a pre-eminence over all other men. Here is no allusion to his being, or to his being called, the Son of God, because of his resurrection from the grave. In Rom. i. 4, to which this Note is

attached, Christ's resurrection from the dead is only mentioned as a proof that he was the Son of God with power, and not that it constituted him such.

"All believers," continue the Editors, "as heirs of the same inheritance, are also sons of God. John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14—17; 1 John iii. 2. Hence they are said to be brethren of Christ, and co-heirs with him; and he is the first-born among many brethren. Rom. viii. 29." If the Editors had said, "All believers, as sons of God, are also heirs of the same inheritance;" they would have expressed themselves more accurately, more consistently with analogy, and with the Scriptures to which they refer. For example: in Rom. viii. 14—17, we read: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God; for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Again, in 1 John iii. 2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Here we are informed, that believers are called the sons of God, as being led by the Spirit of God,

or, as it is elsewhere expressed, as being born again of the Spirit (John iii. 3, 6); and that they are heirs, in consequence of their being sons of God, even co-heirs with Christ; for it is "of his fulness" that they have received a measure of grace and power to "become the sons of God," (John i. 12, 16.) It is only as partaking of the virtue and power of Christ, as the branch partakes of the virtue and sap of the vine, as being conformed to the image of the Son of God, that believers become heirs to the eternal inheritance which Christ hath purchased for them; all their virtue and glory being derived from him as the Son of God,—the Fountain of light and life; for "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." (1 John v. 11, 12.) As the Son of Man, he is the second Adam; and through his resurrection from the dead, by his divine power, the first-born or chief among many brethren, all the glory the latter possess being derived from him as their head.

Although the Editors have failed to produce, in their note on Romans i. 4, a single instance in which Christ is called a Son of God, because of his resurrection from the dead to an immortal life, let us examine whether their *Improved Version* reflects light on this point, which the prejudices of other translators may have caused them to overlook; whether it affords any instance of the title Son of

God being applied to Christ in this lower sense. In this sense, it may be concluded they understood the following passages, in which they have supplied the want of the article in the Greek, by the indefinite article in English.

Matthew xiv. 33, "Then those who were in the ship, came and did him obeisance, saying, 'Truly thou art a Son of God.'"

Ibid. xxvii. 54, "Now when the centurion, and those who were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things which had passed, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was a Son of a God.'"

Luke i. 35, "And the angel answered and said unto her, 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy child also, who shall be born of thee, shall be called a Son of God.'"

Ibid. iv. 9, "And the devil brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a wing of the temple, and said unto him, 'If thou be a Son of God, cast thyself down from this place.'"

John xix. 7, "The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself a Son of God.'"

The Editors have omitted to distinguish, in the foregoing passages, the indefinite article, by printing it in a character distinct from the text; an omission of the Editors which is the less excusable, because, in Matt. xxvii. 40 and 43, where

they have inserted the definite article, they have distinguished it by an italic type, in order to shew that it is supplied by them; and yet, in ver. 54, to exactly the same Greek phrase, under the same circumstance, they have arbitrarily prefixed the indefinite article, both before *Son* and before *God*, as though it were a part of the Greek text; I say arbitrarily, because, if Matthew had intended to express, in ver. 54, a meaning different from verses 40 and 43, he would have so varied his expressions, as to convey such meaning to his reader. The centurion, who was upon duty at the cross, and had heard, whilst there, that Jesus had called himself the Son of God; when he saw the earthquake, and other extraordinary events, which occurred at the death of Jesus, feared greatly, concluding that Jesus must have been, what he professed himself to be, the Son of God. Such is the sense required by the context, whether the centurion be considered as a Jew or Roman.

When we consider, that the mariners, in Matt. xiv. 33, were probably Jews, and not ignorant that Jesus called himself the Son of God, they might attach to this phrase the same meaning as the Jews who are mentioned in John v. 18, and x. 33—when we consider that their confession was produced by witnessing the supernatural power which Jesus possessed over the elements, the common version, which thus renders the passage, “Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying,

Of a truth thou art the Son of God," is most consistent with the circumstances of the case, and equally, if not more, faithful to the Greek original.

The same objection lies against the introduction of the indefinite article before *Son*, in Luke iv. 9, as in Matt. xxvii. 54; viz. that it is inconsistent with the context, and a departure from the Editors' own version of the same Greek phrase used by the same being during the same conversation only a few verses before, where they have introduced the definite article; and, more than this, the same Greek words, used in every respect under the same circumstances, in Matt. iv. 6, the Editors render, "If thou be the Son of God."

It is difficult to discover by what rule, whether as translators or as critics, the Editors were influenced, when they put the indefinite article before *Son*, in John xix. 7. What law had Jesus broken, by declaring himself to be an heir to a glorious inheritance, to an immortal life, through a resurrection from the dead? What blasphemy could there be in such a declaration? Neither is this true in fact; Jesus was not condemned for making a confession which every Pharisee could have made: no; the blasphemy for which the Jews condemned him to death was, that he, being a man, made himself God, by saying, that he was the Son of God. Compare Matt. xxvi. 63—65, Mark xiv. 61—64, Luke xxii. 70, 71, with John v. 18, and x. 33—36.

On Luke i. 35, one of the Editors has so nearly

made the *amende honorable*, that he shall speak for himself. It is in reply to Dr. Magee's charge against the Editors, for having substituted the indefinite article for Newcome's definite article, without noticing in their margin their variation from the Primate's text. "To the charge," says Mr. Belsham, "as it stands in the indictment, the Editors of the Improved Version must plead guilty. They have verily and indeed substituted their own roman A for the Primate's italic *The*. And this they have done, as the Dean says, quite *unacknowledgedly*, and, as I think, very unnecessarily: for it is very probable that the authors of the fable of the miraculous conception meant in this passage to affirm that Jesus derived the title of the Son of God from his miraculous birth."<sup>11</sup>

I doubt not that, ere this, the unbiassed reader will be satisfied that Luke is the author of what the Unitarian is pleased to call "the fable of the miraculous conception;" and that it is just as much a fable as the remainder of the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles by the same author. The exact import of the expression *very probable*, in the above extract, Mr. Belsham is best qualified to explain. It implies something short of certainty. That the reader may judge whether any the least ground for hesitation exists in the text, I will give it, with the context, according to the Primate's

---

<sup>11</sup> Monthly Repos. Vol. XII. p. 82, or Bampton Lecturer reprinted, p. 140.

version, Luke i. 30.—“ And the angel said unto her, ‘ Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. 31. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32. He shall be great, and shall be called *the* Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.’ 34. Then said Mary to the angel, ‘ How shall this thing be, since I know not man?’ 35. And the angel answered and said unto her, ‘ The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: therefore that holy child also, who shall be born *of thee*, shall be called *the* Son of God.’ ”

If there were nothing more explicit than what is said in the 32d verse, Mr. Belsham might, perhaps, have been justified in saying that it is only *very probable* that Jesus was called the Son of God on account of the miraculous conception: but the answer given by the angel, in the 35th verse, to the difficulty which naturally suggested itself to Mary, is too explicit, too unequivocal, to admit of the least hesitation with respect to the import of his address. The Editors’ variation from Newcome is, therefore, quite unjustifiable. Mr. Belsham admits that it is *very unnecessary*. If he mean, that such a variation from the Primate’s text, in passages of Scripture rejected by



the Editors as fables and forgeries, is very unnecessary to the support of the Unitarian cause, it may help us, if such help were wanting, to the standard by which the Editors have made most of their variations from Newcome; it may assist us to appreciate the real merits of their exertions in forming what they call *An Improved Version* upon the basis of Archbishop Newcome's New Translation, *with a corrected text*.

To return to our subject—the concession made by Mr. Belsham, though reluctantly made, that in Luke i. 35, Jesus is called the Son of God, and this, in consequence of his miraculous conception, supersedes the necessity of any further remark, to establish this sense of the passage.

I have now considered every text, in which it might be supposed, from the Editors' introduction of the indefinite article before *Son of God*, that they considered this title to be applied in the New Testament to Christ, in the same sense in which it is applied to every believer, as an heir to an immortal life: the result is, that none of the texts admit of this sense; and their substitution of the indefinite for the Primate's definite article, has been proved to be quite arbitrary, inconsistent with the context, and with their own version of the same Greek phrase in other passages of the New Testament, under the same or similar circumstances.

Every argument which the Editors have advanced, in their Note on Rom. i. 4, has now, I believe, been

examined; whether it be to prove that Christ was not the Son of God, till the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him at his baptism; whether it be to prove that the title *Son of God*, when applied to Christ, in a sense which, they admit, belongs exclusively to him, conveys no other idea, than what is comprehended in the word *Christ* or *Messiah*; or whether it be to prove, that the phrase *a Son of God*, is also applied to Christ, as having been raised from the dead to an immortal life; and that in this sense, it applies equally to all believers, as heirs of the same inheritance.

The Editors conclude their Note on Rom. i. 4, with these words: "These are the only senses in which the title *Son of God* is applied to Christ, in the genuine apostolical writings." If the passages referred to by the Editors in their Note, are genuine apostolical writings, the reader of the foregoing pages may see upon what slight grounds the Unitarian rests his most confident decisions.

Again, the narratives of the miraculous conception meet with confirmation, from Rom. viii. 3. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God hath done; who, by having sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and an offering for sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh;" (according to Newcome's version, which in this passage appears the clearest), and from Gal. iv. 4, "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,

made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

These two texts do not admit of any of the senses given by the Editors, to the phrase Son of God: in both, the appellation of *Son* is applied to Christ, in a sense exclusively appropriate to him; in both, Christ is denominated such from his birth.

According to the accounts of the miraculous conception, the Son of God appeared among us as a man, even in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was indeed made [*γεγόμενον*] of a woman, without the intervention of man; and such is the natural construction of the above two passages of the apostle Paul, when placed in conjunction with the records of this miraculous event in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Like other Scriptures, they reflect light on each other. The Editors feel it, and have therefore recourse to notes, to counteract the impression they might otherwise make on "a sound understanding and an honest mind."

In their Note on Rom. viii. 3, the Editors say, "Christ was the Son of God, *i. e.* he was the promised Messiah. See chap. i. 3. He was God's own Son, or his beloved Son, because he was the most distinguished of the prophets." The first of these assertions has been already considered. If the second assertion is not identical with the first, —and that it is not we may conclude, from the

distinction made between them by the Editors,—we have the authority of these very Editors for averring, that in this sense the title *Son of God* is not “applied to Christ in the genuine apostolical writings.” See their Note on Rom. i. 4, and p. 255 of this work; but as their former assertion on Rom. i. 4, is no more authorised by Scripture than their present on Rom. viii. 3, I shall not urge them to reconcile their inconsistencies, but demand their proof for this last assertion. Where is any prophet in the Old or New Testament called *the* or *a* Son of God, in consequence of his commission or prophetic character? Will they refer us to Gen. xxvi. 24, Num. xii. 7, 8, 2 Kings ix. 7, Isai. xx. 3? If we turn to the New Testament, the proof it affords is not more favourable than that from the Old Testament. In the parable of the husbandmen, Matt. xxi. 33—41, Mark xii. 1—9, Luke xx. 9—16, God is represented under the character of a Husbandman; the prophets, as servants; but Christ himself as an only Son, well beloved. We shall probably be informed, that this is only a parable, and therefore much stress is not to be laid on its language. There is no parable of our Saviour’s, the purport of which is more obvious than that to which I have referred. Will the Unitarian venture to assert that in it Christ did not point out the Jewish prophets by the designation of servants, and himself by the designation of the Son? Again,

in Heb. iii. 5, 6, the greatest prophet under the law has no higher designation than that of a *servant*, whilst Christ has that of a *Son*.

In their Note on Rom. viii. 3, the Editors further remark:—"He was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh; *i e.* notwithstanding the holiness of his character, and the dignity of his office, he was treated like a sinner and an outcast." If Christ were treated as such, so were the prophets before him; but did they, therefore, as contradistinguished from their persecutors, from their contemporaries, appear as unholy—as sinners? Whether the prophets did or not, the Editors are certain that Christ, being holy, appeared, and was treated, as a sinner. Their proof for such assertions is demanded. Christ did not appear to Pilate, an heathen, as a sinner, but as a "*just person*." Pilate knew that the chief priests had delivered Christ to him through envy; he knew that, to shed his blood, was to shed the blood of innocence, and therefore endeavoured to clear himself from the guilt of such an unjust sentence, by washing his hands. Matt. xxvii. 18, 24. Thus the Editors' strained and perverted interpretation of the apostle's words is contradicted by fact; and it is repugnant to common sense, as it destroys all distinction, as to external appearance, between the saint and the sinner, between the holy and the unholy; since, according to the Editors' logic, those traits by which the Redeemer said his followers

would be distinguished from other men—by being hated, spoken evil of, and persecuted by wicked men—were, notwithstanding the holiness of their lives, and the purity of their conversation, so many external marks of their being sinners.

The error of the Editors consists in applying to the personal character of Christ, expressions which are applied by the apostle generically, as descriptive of the human kind. This will appear by the context: “For what the law could not do,” says St. Paul, “in that it was weak through the flesh, God hath done; who, by having sent his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and an offering for sins, hath condemned sin in the flesh;” that is, wherein the law was insufficient and weak, towards effecting the moral and spiritual change, called regeneration, through the sinfulness of the flesh, or of human nature, God effected, by *sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, &c.* The apostle Paul here says the same thing as St. John says in his Gospel, chap. i. 14: “And the Word was made flesh [*i. e.* man], and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” They both declare the incarnation of the Son of God. The difference in the mode of expression between St. Paul and St. John, is to be attributed to the argument of the former leading him to advert to the inherent sinfulness of human nature, which is implied in the word *sinful* before *flesh*:

for though the Son of God really became flesh, or man, and appeared, as to his human nature, like other men, yet he was without sin—it had no power over him. The word *likeness*, in Rom. viii. 3, must therefore be considered as referring to *sinful*, as Christ was really man, but only in the *likeness* of *sinful* man; because, by being without sin, he differed from all other men that ever had or would exist, not excepting the most holy and devoted servants of God; for though he partook of the same human nature, and was exposed to the same temptations, for he “was tempted in all points as we are,” yet he was “without sin.” Heb. iv. 15.

On Gal. iv. 4, the Editors subjoin two Notes. In the first, they say, “‘God sent forth his Son,’ gave him a divine commission. John i. 6; xvii. 18. ‘St. Paul says here, that, at his appointed time, the Almighty gave a commission to Jesus, the son of Mary, of a Jewish family, subject to the law of Moses.’—*Lindsey’s Second Address*, p. 282.” On this interpretation of the apostle’s words, that by the phrase, the *Son of God*, he only means a divine commission from God, I refer the reader to what I have already said on a similar interpretation of the Editors, on Rom. viii. 3; and upon the interpretation given to that phrase, the sense of the whole paragraph depends, and not upon the verb *sent*, as the Editors appear to intimate, by their reference to texts which have not the

most remote analogy to the text under discussion, further than is implied by the use of the same verb. For example: what analogy is there between Gal. iv. 4, or Rom. viii. 3, and John i. 6? "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John," conveys a simple idea, easily understood; but not the same idea as Gal. iv. 4, "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," &c.; or, as in Rom. viii. 3, "sent his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh," &c. No doubt John the Baptist, and every other prophet, who had received a divine commission, were *sent* from God, to deliver such commission to mankind; but unless such commission constituted any of them God's *own son*, his *only-begotten son* made flesh, the analogy entirely fails. In St. John's Gospel, i. 14, the incarnation of the Son of God is as explicitly expressed as in the Epistles to the Galatians and Romans, without the word *sent* being introduced. Again, in John xvi. 27, 28, 1 John iv. 2, 3, and other passages of Scripture, in a variety of forms of expression, the pre-existence of Christ, as the Son of God, is so clearly adverted to, as not to leave the proof of the doctrine depending upon any single text, much less upon a single word.

The Editors, in their second Note on Gal. iv. 4, say, "The phrase, 'born of a woman,' bears no allusion to the supposed miraculous conception of



Christ. It is a common Jewish phrase<sup>12</sup>, to express a proper human being. See Job xiv. 1, xv. 14,

---

<sup>12</sup> Bishop Horsley has, in his Fourth Letter to Dr. Priestley, some judicious observations on the attempt of the Unitarians of his time, to take refuge in Jewish idioms and phraseology, to support their interpretation of Scripture. "It is, perhaps," says the Bishop, "from something of a secret misgiving, that your interpretation of the phrase of 'coming in the flesh,' will not be allowed to be its natural and obvious meaning, that you are so desirous to retreat into the strong hold of Jewish idioms. You think the phrase in question, 'is similar to other Jewish phrases,' which you think will be allowed to be merely expressions of humanity. I fear, Sir, it hath been the custom of late, to lay too much stress upon Jewish idioms, in the exposition of the didactic parts of the New Testament. The Gospel is a general revelation. If it is delivered in a style which is not perspicuous to the illiterate of any nation except the Jewish, it is as much locked up from general apprehension, as if the Sacred Books had been written in the vernacular gibberish of the Jews of that age. The Holy Spirit, which directed the apostles and the evangelists to the use of the tongue, which in their day was the most generally understood, the Greek, would, for the same reason, it may be presumed, have suggested to them a style which might be generally perspicuous. It is therefore a principle with me, that the true sense of any phrase in the New Testament is, for the most part, what may be called a standing sense, that which will be the first to occur to common people, of every country, and in every age; and I am apt to think, that the difference between this standing sense and the Jewish sense, will, in all cases, be far less than is imagined, or none at all; because, though different languages differ widely in their refined and elevated idioms, common speech is, in all languages, pretty much the same."

The Bishop then proceeds, with his usual ability, to illustrate these remarks, by exposing the futility of the inference Dr. Priestley attempts to draw from, what he calls, Jewish phrases, to evade the force of the phrase "coming in the flesh." "The word to come," says Bishop Horsley, "is used by metaphor, I believe, in all languages, to signify either a man's birth, or first entrance into life. *He came into the world—he came into life—he came into business.* I have no where affirmed that such phrases denote any thing more than human, in any person to whom they may be applied. But is the phrase 'to come in the flesh,' no more than equivalent to the word 'to come?' Are the words 'in the flesh' mere expletives? If they are not expletives,

xxv. 4; Matt. xi. 11; Luke vii. 28." The English reader would naturally conclude, from the words of the Editors, that in the original Greek the same phraseology is used in Gal. iv. 4, as in the texts referred to: what must then be his surprise, when he is informed, that if we are to learn from the above passages in Job, Matthew and Luke, the common Jewish phrase to express a proper human being, the apostle has departed from that phrase, and substituted the Greek word *γενόμενον*, derived from *γίγνομαι*, *to be, to become, to be made, &c.*, for *γεννητός*, derived from *γεννάω*, *born, produced*. Neither can it be supposed that the apostle introduced, without design, a word which had not

---

what is their import, but to limit the sense of the word 'to come' to some particular manner of coming? This limitation either presumes a possibility of other ways of coming, or it is nugatory. But was it possible for a mere man to come otherwise than in the flesh? Nothing can be more decisive for my purpose than this comparison which you have suggested, between the word 'to come,' which is general, and the phrase 'to come in the flesh,' which is specific. My thanks are due to you for this illustration of my argument, which may be rendered still more evident, by supplying the two phrases successively to a familiar instance. If some future historian of these planet-stricken times, should say, 'In the latter end of the eighteenth century, came Dr. Priestley, preaching the Unitarian doctrine,' no one will suspect any thing more, than that a man of this name preached this doctrine. But if the historian should say, 'Dr. Priestley came *in the flesh*,' preaching this doctrine; if the writer, who may use this expression, shall have any credit in his day, a general curiosity will be excited, to know whether Dr. Priestley had it in his power to come in any way without his flesh, unmanacled with membrane, joint, or limb; and when once it shall be found that he had not, the style of the writer will be condemned, and his credit perhaps lessened. I leave you to make the application." p. 121—124.

been before used in the same connexion, by any other Sacred Writer; and Luke's narrative of the miraculous conception explains this design. Our authorised English version, which renders this passage, "made of a woman, made under the law," is therefore more strictly conformable to the original, than the rendering of the Improved Version. The orthodox interpretation of Gal. iv. 4, is not built either on *γενόμενον* or *γυναικὸς* separately, but upon the connexion in which they are used, and as applied exclusively to an individual of the human species, and not to the species generally, as is the case with the passages to which the Editors refer.

Several more passages might be produced, from the Epistles, which contain allusions, more or less direct, to the miraculous conception; and I would call the reader's attention to one leading trait in St. John's Gospel, noticed by Evanson,—that our Lord, throughout this Gospel, is made, in almost every discourse, to acknowledge God, and no other, for his Father. Not that our Lord is represented as acknowledging any other father than God, in the other Gospels; but those discourses of Christ, in which this allusion most appears, more frequently occur in the Gospel of St. John.

The reader will now judge of the truth of the assertion of the Editors, that "Jesus is uniformly spoken of as the son of Joseph and Mary." That Jesus was the legitimate son of Joseph, according to the Jewish (or, indeed, the English) law, has

been already shown; if he were, therefore, sometimes spoken of as such by the Sacred Writers, he would not have been improperly described. Where are the proofs of the Editors, that he is so described by the Sacred Writers? The texts to which they refer, in their Note on Matt. i. 16, do not present us with a single instance: they are, with one exception, the prejudiced reasoning of the avowed enemies of our Lord. Such are Matt. xiii. 55, and Luke iv. 22.

John vi. 42 contains an objection advanced by the unbelieving Jews to Christ's description of himself, as inconsistent with his human origin—with his being the son of Joseph. Their objection, therefore, presents an argument in favour of the miraculous conception. In John i. 45, we meet with Philip's address to Nathaniel: "We have found him, of whom Moses, in the law and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." It was natural for Philip so to describe Jesus, that Nathaniel should understand of whom he spake; as Jesus was the legitimate Son of Joseph and Mary, he would, no doubt, be designated as such by the Jews. That he should be denominated Jesus of Nazareth, the place of abode of his father and mother before, as well as after, his birth, the place where he was brought up, and where he appears to have constantly resided till he was thirty years of age, was consistent with the custom of every country—a custom that would not

be superseded by the incidental circumstance of his being born from home, when his parents were on a journey. It might also, were it necessary, be shewn, that such adjuncts do not always determine the place of a person's birth.

In none of these instances is Jesus called the son of Joseph, by the writer himself. In Luke iii. 23, he is indeed so called by the evangelist, but with a reservation which deprives the Editors of it, as a testimony in favour of their position. On the other hand, Jesus is described, by each of the evangelists, in the most explicit manner, as the Son of God; as such does Jesus describe himself—as such is he preached by the apostles to Jews and Gentiles.

## CHAP. VIII.

*On the Application of the Phrase Son of Man to Christ—The Style of the First Two Chapters of St. Luke's Gospel vindicated—The Objection, that there are many Circumstances recorded in the Introductory Chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, which wear an improbable Aspect, investigated—Examination of the Editors' Objection, that Matthew's Reasoning, from the Prophecies of the Old Testament, is inconclusive—Strictures on the Attempt of the Editors of the Improved Version, to parry the Objection that so large and gross an Interpolation, as the Narratives of the Miraculous Conception, could not have escaped Detection—The Early Christians vindicated from the Charge preferred against them, of corrupting the Text of the New Testament—Every Attempt to weaken or destroy the Divine Authority of the New Testament, will prove abortive.*

BEFORE we proceed to the consideration of the remaining objections of the Editors of the Improved Version, I shall make a passing observation on the phrase *Son of Man*, as applied by our Saviour to himself, which Evanson, and some subsequent Unitarian writers, have represented as inconsistent with the accounts of the miraculous conception. On this phrase, Mr. Belsham observes, "Christ speaks of himself emphatically, as THE Son of

Man, by which form of expression it is probable that he not only means to describe himself as a proper human being, but to insinuate that he was himself that Messiah whom they [the Jews] understood to be foretold by the prophet Daniel. That the phrase 'Son of Man' was regarded as nearly equivalent to that of Messiah, is apparent from John xii. 34. The expression, however, is ambiguous; and our Lord perhaps chose to adopt it, when speaking of himself in public, in order to excite attention to his claim, and, at the same time, to avoid an explicit declaration that he was the Messiah, which he generally declined during his personal ministry."<sup>1</sup>

This is the language of one of the Editors of the Improved Version. If by the expression, "a proper human being," is intended a true and real man, the above passage calls for no animadversion. That Christ was, as the Son of David, a proper human being, is the opinion of those who consider him to be the Son of God, in consequence of the miraculous conception of his virgin mother. And the former sentiment is, according to them, as essential as the latter, to constitute a right belief in Jesus, as the Messiah. However, therefore, the foregoing passage may militate against the Gnostic and Marcionite notions, it does not affect the orthodox belief. So much for the application of the epithet *Son of Man* to Christ.

---

<sup>1</sup> Belsham's *Calm Inquiry*, 2d edit. pp. 251, 252.

The Editors, in their Note on Luke i. 4, say: "The style of the two first chapters is different from the rest of the history." Wherein this difference consists we are not informed, but referred to Evanson's Dissonance. Evanson presents his objection in a negative form, as of minor importance. "Now, to lay no stress," says he, "upon the dissimilarity of style, observable between these two first chapters and the rest of Luke's histories, and the affected, but *sometimes* unsuccessful, imitation of his common phraseology<sup>2</sup>." This is all that Evanson says in his text; from which it may be fairly inferred, that he himself even admitted that *sometimes*, at least, the similarity of style between the first two chapters and the other parts of Luke's writings is so close, as not to be detected as proceeding from the pen of another writer.

In a Note on the above passage, Evanson says: "For example, this interpolated fable begins with the same word, ἐγένετο, with which Luke begins most of his paragraphs; but in Luke it always means, it came to pass, or, he was made or became, and never, *there was*, which is its only meaning here, and for which Luke always uses ἦν." In Luke xxii. 24, Acts viii. 8, and xxiii. 9, ἐγένετο occurs in the same sense as in Luke i. 5, that sense in which Evanson says "Luke always uses ἦν," and never ἐγένετο. If Evanson had said that

---

<sup>2</sup> Evanson's Dissonance, edit. 1792, p. 49.



*ἐγένετο* very seldom, in the writings of Luke, means *there was*, it would have approached nearer to the truth: but then it will equally apply to the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel; for *ἐγένετο* occurs in these two chapters only twice in the sense of *there was*, and seven times in the sense of *it came to pass*; and in Luke ii. 25, 36, *ἦν* is used for *there was*.

Thus, the only example selected by Evanson, to support this charge of dissimilarity of style between the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel, and the rest of his writings, not only fail him, but is evidence against him. In Luke ii. 9, and Acts xii. 7, occur the same phraseology, not to be found in any other Sacred Writer. Again, words occur in these two chapters, which are exclusively used by Luke: for example, *ἡγεμονεύω* in Luke ii. 2, viii. 1; *μεγαλεῖα* in Luke i. 49, and Acts ii. 11; *εὐλαβῆς* in Luke ii. 25, Acts ii. 5, and viii. 2. See also Mr. Rennell's *Animadversions on the Unitarian Version*, pp. 11, 12. These specific coincidences in style authorise us to return upon the Editors their indefinite charge of difference of style between the first two chapters of Luke with the other parts of his writings, as having been too hastily advanced, on the authority of Evanson, without sufficient examination.

Of the narrative contained in the first two chapters of Luke, the Editors say: "That John the Baptist should have been ignorant of the

person of Christ, is not probable, if this narrative be true. John i. 31—34.” This objection appears to be founded on a misconception of the passage referred to. That John the Baptist was not ignorant of the person of Christ, is evident, from Matt. iii. 14. By the ignorance of John the Baptist, mentioned John i. 31—33, must be understood an ignorance of Jesus being the Messiah, till he had seen that proof of his being such, which had been pointed out to him, as the distinguishing mark to guide him to the knowledge of the Messiah, by the same Divine Being who sent him to baptize with water.

John, in the exercise of his mission, as the prophet and forerunner of the Messiah, was not to be guided by his private knowledge of any man, not even of Jesus himself, but by that certainty which revelation only could afford. “I knew him not [*i. e.* the Messiah]; but he that sent me to baptize with water,” says John, “the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.” For an illustration of what is here said, on the sense of John i. 31—34, the reader is referred to Luke vii. 19, 20. John’s faith being tried by the hardships of his imprisonment, could not alter his personal knowledge of Jesus, but it might raise doubts in his mind whether he were really the Christ. Our

Saviour's answer to John's message was adapted to such a tried state of mind; and, no doubt, the same divine power which performed the miracles of which John's disciples were witnesses, accompanied the answer, so as to revive the drooping faith of this tried servant and prophet.

"And there are," continue the Editors, "many other circumstances in the story which wear an improbable and fabulous aspect. Evanson's Disson. ch. i. sect. 3, p. 57." I have turned to Evanson, to see what light he would reflect on this indefinite charge; and, I must confess, I have looked in vain for the circumstances of an improbable and fabulous aspect. But let us examine some objections urged by Evanson, to which, probably, the Editors allude. The first is the name given to the angel who appeared to Zacharias and Mary. As the objection to this name applies equally to the Book of Daniel as to the first chapter of Luke, I shall not detain the reader with any observation on an objection so untenable, and in itself frivolous.

The second circumstance adverted to by Evanson, upon which he appears to lay more stress than upon the name given to the angel, is thus expressed by him. "Elizabeth is said to be not only of the tribe of Levi, but *of the daughters of Aaron*; and she is yet spoken of as nearly related to Mary, who, if there be any truth in the story of the miraculous birth of Jesus, must necessarily have been, in an uninterrupted line, of the tribe of

Judah, and of the family of David, to make him, in any sense, a descendant of that prince. It is true that, among the Jews, heiresses alone were forbidden to marry out of their own tribe; but since the whole tribe of Levi, and more especially the family of Aaron, were separated from all the other tribes and families, and peculiarly sanctified and appropriated to the rites and offices of their religion, it is in the highest degree improbable that *they* should intermarry with any other tribe."<sup>3</sup>

This is mere hypothesis: the only restriction laid on the priests was, that they should not marry a woman divorced, but a virgin of the daughter of their people, that is, an Israelite. To the above reasoning, I shall oppose a simple fact. Jehosheba, as she is called in the Second of Kings, or Jehoshabeath, as she is called in the Second of Chronicles, sister of Ahaziah, king of Judah, was married to Jehoiada the priest, who, as such, must have been of the family of Aaron. Here is on record, in the Jewish sacred books, an alliance by marriage, between the family of David, in the royal line, and the family of Aaron. So much for Evanson's "highest degree of improbability," that any alliance should exist between the house of Aaron and the house of David.

When Evanson says that Elizabeth is spoken of

---

<sup>3</sup> Evanson's Dissonance, p. 34.

as nearly related to Mary, he says what is contradicted by the text of Scripture; from which it is evident, that they were not nearly related. Whatever intimacy might have subsisted between Elizabeth and Mary, they lived at too great a distance to have frequent intercourse; that this distance was an impediment to their often visiting, may be inferred from Mary's long sojourn with Elizabeth, when she did visit her, as mentioned in Luke i. 56. Hence the positive assertion, that, according to the narrative, "the two children [John and Jesus] must have passed great part of their early years together," is any thing but probable. And what is the object of such an unwarranted assertion? Evanson informs us, when he says, "that this whole history of the consanguinity and intimate familiarity between Mary and Elizabeth, is irreconcilable to the subsequent narrative of Luke himself." Evanson here adverts to Luke's account of John the Baptist sending two of his disciples to Jesus, chap. vii. 17—23, which has been already noticed; an account no more inconsistent with the first two chapters of Luke, than with chap. iii. 5—22. An equal difficulty exists between Matt. iii. 14—17, and xi. 2—6, and between the seventh chapter of Luke, and John i. 29—34. The genuineness of all these passages being admitted by the Editors of the Improved Version, they are equally, with us, engaged so to interpret them, as to preserve their consistency.

In the case under consideration, I see no difficulty: when John sent his disciples to Jesus, he felt the want of that faith which Peter possessed, when our Lord said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven." Yet this same Peter afterwards denied his Lord and Master. Faith is the gift of God, and it may sometimes comport with his all-gracious designs, to try the faith of the most devoted of his servants, as it were, to a hair's breadth. An instructive example of this trial of faith is presented to us in the Book of Job.

Evanson further urges the improbability, that the Jewish prophecies should "be accomplished by two persons, related by consanguinity to each other, and whose parents were so intimately connected, as might afford the incredulous strong grounds whereon to apprehend some family collusion in the case, and to suspect the pretensions of both the cousins to distinguished regard of artful imposture<sup>4</sup>." In addition to what has been already said, in reply to this objection, from the consanguinity and intimacy between the parents of John and Jesus, it is to be considered, that Zacharias and Elizabeth were both aged when John was born to them; and it was full thirty years afterwards when John commenced his ministry. It is therefore more than probable, that Zacharias and Elizabeth were both

---

<sup>4</sup> Evanson's Dissonance, pp. 34, 35.

consigned to the grave years before this event; neither does it appear, from the evangelical narratives, that Joseph, the father of Jesus, was living when Jesus commenced his ministry. No collusion between the parents could therefore be suspected. As to the children, though they might have had some previous knowledge of each other,—that they had much intercourse, or were intimate with each other, cannot be inferred from the evangelical accounts. When John commenced his ministry in the wilderness of Judea, Jesus was at his usual place of abode, Nazareth, in Galilee; he afterwards went to Judea, and was baptized by John. During their ministry, there appears nothing like collusion between them. When John was in prison, Jesus did not exert any miraculous power for his deliverance, or to rescue him from a violent death.

The account of Simeon and Anna, in the second chapter of Luke, does not escape animadversion. Evanson says, it is inconsistent with the well-known historical truth, that there never was a prophet among the Jews, from the time of their return from their captivity, to the preaching of John the Baptist. Upon whatever authority Evanson has ventured this assertion, he has been misled. There were three of the Jewish prophetic books written after the captivity; viz. Zechariah, Haggai, and Malachi. And though, after the time of Malachi, there was such a dearth of

prophetic vision, that no addition was made to the Jewish canon of Scripture, it does not therefore follow, that no Jew, after that period, possessed any portion of the prophetic spirit. Let this be decided how it may, the words *prophet* and *prophecy* are used with a much greater latitude in their meaning in the New Testament, than in the Old. In the passages objected to, Simeon is not described as a prophet; and though Anna is called a prophetess, it does not follow that she professed to predict future events, which was the characteristic trait of the ancient Jewish prophets. We read of no prophecy, in the strict Jewish sense of the word, of John the Baptist; yet he is pronounced, by Christ, to be the greatest prophet born of a woman; whilst Josephus, a strict Jew, does not even call him a prophet, though he speaks highly of him as a good and virtuous man, "who commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God<sup>5</sup>." These considerations suffice to expose the weakness of Evanson's animadversions on Luke's account of Simeon and Anna.

The foregoing are, I presume, the "many other circumstances in the story," for which the Editors refer to Evanson, "which," say they, "wear an improbable and fabulous aspect." I have assigned my reasons for entirely differing from the Editors

---

<sup>5</sup> Josephus's Antiq. Book XVIII. c. 5. § 2.



and from Evanson. The reader is in possession of these reasons, and will judge for himself.

“The evangelist,” say the Editors, “in his preface to the history of the Acts of the Apostles, reminds his friend Theophilus, Acts i. 1, that his former history contained an account of the public ministry of Jesus, but makes no allusion to the remarkable incidents contained in the two first chapters, which therefore probably were not written by him.”

The Editors seem conscious that their conclusion is but weakly supported by their premise. The objection, as stated by them, is merely negative, upon which no stress can be laid; but, under the pen of Evanson, the objection is made to assume a more definite and positive form: his words are, “We have St. Luke’s own testimony to convince us that this is the case, [that he could not be the author of the first two chapters], and do not depend upon any man’s inference or opinion. He has addressed both his histories to the same Theophilus; and in the address, which is introductory to his second book, he gives an accurate description of the contents of the first: ‘The former treatise,’ says he, ‘I have made of all that Jesus began to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up.’ That is, My former book is a history of the acts and doctrine of Jesus, from their first commencement to his ascension. St. Luke himself, therefore, assures us, (and a writer’s word may

surely be taken for the contents of his own work) that his first history went no higher than the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, and ended with his ascension into heaven<sup>6</sup>." When it is made to appear that St. Luke so assures us, we shall not hesitate to believe him. But where does Luke says so? Not in the foregoing passage cited by Evanson. It only says, that Luke had, in a former treatise, given a biographical memoir of Jesus, which memoir would have been incomplete without some account of the descent of the subject of the memoir; the omission of this information is not even implied by the words of Luke. Nothing, either for or against the genuineness of the first two chapters of Luke, can be inferred from the preface to his Acts of the Apostles. By such criticism, it might be inferred from the word *all*, in ver. 1, of the preface to the Acts, that whatever is recorded in the other Gospels of what Jesus did and taught, not contained in the Gospel of St. Luke, are to be rejected as spurious, and of no authority, which would carry us to the length to which, though Evanson himself went, the Editors of the Improved Version are not yet prepared to follow him; that is, of rejecting as spurious all the Gospels but that of Luke. That Luke did not use the word *all* in a sense that would justify such a conclusion, is demonstrable from a subsequent passage in the

---

<sup>6</sup> Evanson's Dissonance, pp. 50, 51.

same chapter, (Acts i. 3—10) from which it is certain, that his Gospel does not really contain all that Jesus did and taught.

The Editors have a remark on the first two chapters of Matthew, in their Note on Matt. i. 16, somewhat similar to that I have just noticed on Luke. "Some of the facts," say they, "have a fabulous appearance, and the reasoning from the prophecies is inconclusive." This remark is expressed in such general terms, that I shall again turn to Evanson, for a specification of the facts that have a fabulous appearance.

The appearance of the star to the wise men of the East, is one of these facts. It is objected, as "absolutely impossible," that a luminous object, appearing in the heavens as a star, could, "in the nature of things, mark out any particular house; for even on a supposition that it was stationed directly over the house, the eye of the beholder could not possibly perceive that, but must of necessity refer it to the same situation with all the other stars in that part of the firmament opposite to his eye, when looking at the supposed meteor; and therefore it must always appear to him equally distant from him with the remotest star in the heavens."<sup>7</sup>

This argument might apply to the usual appearance of a planet, or one of the fixed stars

---

<sup>7</sup> Evanson's *Dissonance*, pp. 123, 124.

in the heavens; but of such a star Matthew says nothing. He informs us of a supernatural phenomenon, placed in the atmosphere by the omnipotent power of God, which, whilst it appeared as a star to the eyes of the magi, or wise men, seemed also to go before them, till it directed them to the object of their search. This, Evanson has the temerity to assert, was impossible for the Great Supreme to do; an assertion which would more consistently have proceeded from the pen of an Atheist, than from a believer in divine revelation. The same Almighty Power, which placed such a star in the heavens, could, with equal facility, so direct the star to the vision of the magi, that it should guide them to the right place, even to the house itself where the child Jesus was.

Another circumstance attending this account of the visit of the wise men, which Evanson also pronounces "absolutely impossible," is, "that the immutable Deity, whose word, spoken by the Jewish prophets, is replete with taunting sneers at the vanity and folly of the pretended science of astrology, and who expressly commanded all astrologers among his own people to be put to death, should so greatly *change* his sentiments and conduct respecting it, to give it the most distinguished token of his approbation and encouragement, by permitting Pagan divines to discover the nativity of the promised Messiah, by their skill in astrology, and become the first promulgators of it to the

Jewish government<sup>8</sup>." That these magi, or wise men, were not Jews, may be concluded from the narrative. From their being called magi, it is more probable they were Persian than Chaldean astrologers. Whether they were Persians, or whether they were Chaldeans, we may conclude that they were such virtuous heathens as are described by St. Paul; when he says, "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which shew the work of the law written in their hearts;" "For," says the apostle, "there is no respect of persons with God, who will render to every man according to his deeds; glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." See Rom. ii. 6—15.

Here is a full answer to the argument which Evanson has attempted to establish upon the immutability of the Deity. We are indebted to Evanson for the discovery, that these magi were Chaldean astrologers, who, by their skill in astrology, "had calculated the nativity of this new-born King of the Jews by a star." He would have conferred an additional obligation on us, had he referred to his authority. Matthew has not a word on the

---

<sup>8</sup> Evanson's Dissonance, p. 124.

subject: according to him, the star, and information it conveyed to these virtuous Gentiles, of the birth of the Messiah, appear to have been supernatural, proceeding from the same Divine Being, who warned them from returning to Herod. This is, at least, the rational inference to be drawn from the narrative. The magi had seen, in their own country, an unusual appearance, or phenomenon, of a star, which, they understood, indicated the birth of the King of the Jews. When they arrived in Judea, and made inquiry respecting this extraordinary child, they received information which would probably have misled them; when the same extraordinary star, which they had seen in their own country, appeared again to them, and went before them, as a guide to direct them to the house where the child was. From the great joy they felt at again seeing this star, after they left Herod, we may conclude that, till then, they had not seen it since they left their own country;—a proof that it was not a natural phenomenon in the heavens, upon which an astrologer might make his calculations, but that it was supernatural, and specially sent to announce to them the birth of the Messiah.

The account of the slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem and its vicinity, by Herod, is another circumstance mentioned by Evanson, as a gross and palpable falsehood: he also objects to the account of Joseph's going to Galilee, after his

return from Egypt. Both of these circumstances have been adverted to in the second chapter of this work, p. 68—71, and proved to be consistent with the accounts which profane history give of the character and conduct of Herod, and with the state of his kingdom after his death. The objection arising from the silence of Josephus and the Roman historians, with respect to this particular act of cruelty of Herod, has been noticed in the sixth chapter, p. 188—197. The reader is therefore referred to these chapters, as containing a sufficient answer to Evanson's animadversions.

Having disposed of the first part of the Editors' remark, in their Note on Matt. i. 16, let us proceed to consider the latter part, that "the reasoning from the prophecies is inconclusive." An Unitarian cannot consistently object, against the historical fidelity of an evangelist, the inaccuracy or inconclusiveness of his reasoning; since, according to him, an apostle, if not Christ himself, may reason inconclusively, without any impeachment of his divine mission, much less of his veracity: but, for the sake of those who have not so low an opinion of Christ, and of his apostles, this remark of the Editors may deserve attention.

Evanson, to whom we shall again have recourse, to give the Editors' remark a specific form, says that Matthew, or the author of the Gospel which goes by his name, "refers us to that well-known prophecy in Isaiah vii. 14, 'Behold, a young

woman shall conceive, and bear a son,' &c. The word which I translate *a young woman*, he renders *a virgin*; and insinuates that, by virtue of that single word, the prophet meant a miraculous conception, without the intervention of a man; and that the child intended in the prophecy was the child Jesus."<sup>9</sup>

I shall first notice Evanson's reasons for substituting *a young woman* for *a virgin*, in the prophecy; it being necessary to establish the text of the prophecy, before we can determine any thing as to its application. Secondly, I shall next consider its design, and how far it met with its completion in the days of Ahaz.

"As to the word, translated *a virgin*," says Evanson, "on which so much stress is, in vain, unreasonably laid, it is evident that, in the original, it does not necessarily signify any thing more than a woman, young enough to bear children, from its being the very same word which is used in Proverbs xxx. 19, and there translated *a maid*; for *a virgin*, in the strict sense of the word, could not be meant in that place, because 'the way of a man with' such an one, is by no means trackless and undiscernible; and because the writer expressly uses it to signify a married woman, saying, 'such is the way of the *adulterous* woman.'"<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Evanson's Dissonance, p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 121.



The passage in Proverbs does not authorise the inference Evanson has drawn from it. Agur says, "There be three things which are too wonderful for me; yea, four, which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air—the way of a serpent upon a rock—the way of a ship in the midst of the sea—and the way of a man with a maid. Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness." Prov. xxx. 18—20.

The things enumerated by Agur, as too wonderful for him, have no connexion with each other; the antecedent to the word *such*, in the 20th verse, is therefore not to be sought for in the 19th, but in the 18th verse, since it no more refers to *the way of a man with a maid*, than to *the way of a ship*, *the way of a serpent*, or *the way of an eagle*. In none of these instances does any moral difficulty present itself to the reader; whereas, in the 20th verse, the obvious meaning of Agur is, that it is too wonderful for him, and he knows not how an adulterous woman can calmly and deliberately say, *I have done no wickedness*. Thus, if we follow the common Hebrew text, the context affords no excuse for not understanding the Hebrew word עלמה, *almah*, as meaning a virgin, in the strict sense of the word: indeed, what Agur in this place pronounces too wonderful for him, I consider, absolutely requires this sense.

One Hebrew MS. and the Syriac, Septuagint,

*Arabic*, and *Vulgate* Versions, give the passage quite a different turn; and, instead of *the way of a man with a maid*, read, *the way of a stout man in his youth*; which, as Dr. Adam Clarke observes, “deprives it of much of its influence on the present question.”

But we are under no necessity to have recourse to an ambiguous text in Proverbs, to ascertain the sense of Isaiah vii. 14; it has been settled by the authors of the Septuagint Version, who wrote nearly three centuries before Matthew, and who render the Hebrew word *almah*, by *παρθένος*, *parthenos*, a virgin. This rendering of the Jewish authors of the Septuagint, uninfluenced by any theological prejudices, is more decisive of the real import of the Hebrew, than all the attempts of the Jewish writers, since the Christian era, to divest the Hebrew word of its proper and literal meaning. Matthew only renders the word as it was understood by the Jews three hundred years before he wrote, as it was understood by the Jews of the age in which he wrote. See Dr. Adam Clarke’s Note on Matt. i. 23; Kidder’s *Demonstration of the Messias*, Part II. chap. V.; and Vol. II. p. 258—300.

Having shewn the invalidity of Evanson’s objection to the usual rendering of Isaiah vii. 14, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,” we will now consider the design of the prophecy. It was a sign given to the house of David (not to

Ahaz, as Evanson insinuates) on the following occasion. Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, leagued together against Judah, to dethrone its king, who was descended from David, and to place another family on the throne; and though, on account of the wickedness of Ahaz, the king of Judah, they were permitted to distress him, and defeat him in the open field, (2 Chron. xxviii. 5—15); yet they failed in their object, being obliged to raise the siege of Jerusalem, and leave Ahaz in quiet possession of his throne, (2 Kings xvi. 5). Whilst Ahaz was under discouragement, in consequence of this formidable conspiracy against him, which threatened nothing short of his entire ruin, the prophet Isaiah was sent to encourage him; and after predicting the failure of its object, to place another family on the throne of David, the account proceeds, “Moreover, the Lord spake to Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing to weary man, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that

thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." Isai. vii. 10—16.

Let the reader mark the introduction of the sign here given, and his common sense will determine—whether an event so familiar and common as a young married woman conceiving, and bringing forth a child, could be adverted to as a sign—whether the plain and literal import of the words, used by the prophet, admits of a meaning so ill according with the solemnity of the introduction of the sign, as “selected and given by God himself, after Ahaz had rejected the offer of any sign of his own choosing, out of the whole compass of nature.” That a sign selected, when there was a formidable conspiracy to place another family on the throne of David, should call the attention of Judah beyond the temporary occasion of the prophecy to that future descendant of David, whose kingdom was to be an everlasting kingdom, and of whose government there was to be no end, is consistent with the manner in which many of the prophecies respecting the Messiah, are delivered by this prophet; for, as Bishop Lowth says, it is “almost the constant practice of this prophet to connect, in like manner, deliverances, temporal with spiritual. Thus the eleventh chapter, setting forth the kingdom of the Messiah, is closely connected with the tenth, which foretels the destruction of Sennacherib. So likewise the destruction of nations, enemies to God, in the thirty-fourth

chapter, introduces the flourishing state of the kingdom of Christ, in the thirty-fifth. And thus the chapters, from forty to forty-nine inclusive, plainly relating to the deliverance from the captivity of Babylon, do, in some parts, as plainly relate to the great deliverance by Christ."

These remarks of Lowth, on the connexion of spiritual deliverance with temporal, by Isaiah, will apply to most of the prophecies of Christ in the other prophets; and where such prophecies admit of a two-fold application, and they primarily relate to Christ, their connexion with the temporal state of the Jewish hierarchy will be proportionably more remote and obscure, because subordinate to the principal design of the prophecy.

The Messiah was to be of the seed of David: a confederacy to place on the throne of David another family, was, therefore, a suitable occasion for the Holy Spirit to direct the attention of the Jews, beyond their present troubles, to the coming of the Messiah, to prepare for which their whole economy was established. The prophecy in the seventh chapter foretels the destruction of both the kings confederate against the house of David, and, at the same time, predicts, under the name of Immanuel, the birth of the Messiah.

Dr. Adam Clarke's illustration of this part of the prophecy is appropriate and judicious. "Not only," says he, "Rezin and Pekah should be unsuccessful against Jerusalem at *that time*, which

was the fact, but Jerusalem, Judea, and the house of David, should be both preserved, notwithstanding their depressed state, and the multitude of their adversaries, till the time should come, when a *VIRGIN shall bear a son*. This is a most remarkable circumstance; the house of David could never fail, till a virgin should conceive and bear a son; nor did it: but when that incredible and miraculous fact did take place, the kingdom and house of David became extinct! This is an irrefragable confutation of every argument a Jew can offer in vindication of his opposition to the Gospel of Christ. Either the prophecy in Isaiah has been fulfilled, or the kingdom and house of David are yet standing. But the kingdom of David, we know, is destroyed; and where is the man, Jew or Gentile, that can shew us a single descendant of David on the face of the earth? The prophecy could not fail; the kingdom and house of David have failed; the *virgin* therefore must have brought forth her son; and this son is Jesus, the Christ. Thus Moses, Isaiah, and Matthew, concur, and facts the most unequivocal have confirmed the whole! Behold the wisdom and providence of God!" The prophecy of Moses, here alluded to by Dr. Adam Clarke, is Gen. iii. 15: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," as predicting that the Messiah "was to be the progeny of the woman, without the concurrence of man."

The next prophecy, beginning chap. viii. and finishing at the 7th verse of the 9th chapter, confirms the promise of deliverance in the preceding chapter; and, as illustrative of its speedy accomplishment, gives a child to Isaiah, which is named *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, meaning, *to hasten to the spoil, to take quickly the prey*, promising and the subjugation of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel, by the king of Assyria, before this child is of sufficient age to say my father and my mother; and the child *Immanuel*, promised in the preceding prophecy, is described in this prophecy as the prince or king of Judah; and the following description of this child, at the close of the prophecy, seems designed to prevent the Jews from resting short of the Messiah, in their application of it. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called *Wonderful*, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."

But, says Evanson, the child given as a sign, in the seventh chapter, is, in the subsequent chapter, "expressly said to be a child of Isaiah, by his own wife." How Evanson came to make such an

assertion, we cannot now call upon him to explain; a distinction between the two children is clearly made in the second prophecy. The child, whose birth is predicted in the seventh chapter, is to be born of a virgin, and to be called [*i. e.* to be] *Immanuel*, or *God with us*. The mother to the child born to Isaiah, was no virgin, neither is it called *Immanuel*, but *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, a name given to it by divine direction, as expressive of the prophetic design of its birth. In this very chapter, verse 8, the child *Immanuel* is expressly distinguished from Isaiah's child, and introduced as the chief or king of Judea; and again, this prophecy closes with a sublime description of this king, which determines him to be of the house of David, and, at the same time, *The Mighty God*. This miraculous union of the divine and human nature, explains the title given to him of **WONDERFUL**.

The fulfilment of the prophecy, as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, determines its application to Christ; as this application is not admitted by the Unitarian, he attempts to expunge, from the New Testament, the narratives of Matthew and Luke, which record its literal fulfilment, and he puts such constructions on the introduction to John's Gospel, which give it any thing but its obvious and literal meaning.

Mr. Belsham does not appear to agree with Evanson, in his construction of Isaiah vii. 14,



though he denies that it is a prophecy of Christ. As it is well known that he is one of the Editors of the Improved Version, candour requires that some notice be taken of his explanation of this prophecy. After quoting Matt. i. 23, he says, " The prophecy here cited from Isaiah vii. 14, has no relation to the birth of the Messiah. The design of the prophet is to announce, that before a young woman, shortly to be married, should have a son grown up to years of discretion, the two kingdoms of Syria and Israel should be overthrown."<sup>11</sup> That is, what the prophet has solemnly given from the Lord, as a sign *to the house of David*, (I repeat, to the house of David, because that might be a sign to the house of David, which could be no sign to Ahaz, except in prophetic vision), is explained by Mr. Belsham to be a mere prophetic declaration, that within a few years, the two kingdoms of Syria and Israel should be overthrown, which is to make what the prophet calls a sign, no sign at all, but simply an allusion to an ordinary passing event, to mark the period of the fulfilment of the prophecy. Mr. Belsham admits,<sup>12</sup> that the child mentioned in Isaiah ix. 6, is a prophecy of Christ: if it be, so must be the child mentioned before, under the name *Immanuel*, because the prophecy in chap. ix. 6, evidently alludes to a previous prophecy of the birth of a

---

<sup>11</sup> Belsham's *Calm Inquiry*, 2d edit. p. 138.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

child; it cannot allude to Isaiah's child, chap. viii. 3; and the description of it accords with what is before said of the child *Immanuel*, chap. vii. 14, and viii. 8. "St. Matthew, therefore," to adopt the words of Lowth, "in applying this prophecy to the birth of Christ, does it not merely in the way of accommodating the words of the prophet to a suitable case not in the prophet's view, but takes it in its strictest, clearest, and most important sense, and applies it, according to the original design and principal intention of the prophet."

That the prophecy in Micah v. 7, applies to Christ, can admit of no dispute; and Evanson's objection to Matthew's, or rather to the chief priests and scribes' application of it, is too trifling to call for a reply. It will be readily admitted, that the prophets, Hosea and Jeremiah, do not appear to have had Christ in their view in those passages quoted from them by Matthew, but that he accommodated their words to the occasion; the question then is, Was the evangelist justified in so doing? The following remarks of Dr. Jortin may assist us to solve this question.

"Passages in the Old Testament, which have been applied to him [Christ], are of four sorts; 1. Accommodations;—2. Direct prophecies;—3. Types;—4. Prophecies of double senses.

"1. Accommodations are passages of the Old Testament, which are adopted by the writers of the New, to something that happened in their

time, because of some correspondence and similitude. These are no prophecies, though they be said sometimes to be *fulfilled*; for any thing may be said to be *fulfilled*, when it can be pertinently applied. For example: St. Matthew says, 'All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.' The meaning is apparently no more than this, that what the Psalmist said of his way of teaching, might justly be said of those discourses of Christ. Thus the apostles frequently allude to the Sacred Writings; and this is no fault, but rather a beauty in writing: and a passage applied justly, and in a new sense, is ever pleasing to an ingenious reader, who loves to be agreeably surprised, and to see a likeness and pertinency where he expected none. He has that surprise which the Latin poet so poetically gives to the tree, *Miraturque novas frondes et non sua poma*.

" 2. Direct prophecies are those which relate to Christ and the Gospel, and to them alone, and which cannot be taken in any other sense.

" 3. A type is a rough draught, a less accurate pattern or model, from which a more perfect image or work is made. Types, or typical prophecies, are things which happened, and were done, in ancient time, and are recorded in the Old Testament;

and which are found afterwards to describe or represent something which befel our Lord, and which relates to him and his Gospel. For example: under the law, a lamb was offered for a sin-offering, and thus an atonement was made for transgressions. John the Baptist calls Christ *the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world*; and St. Peter tells Christians, that they are redeemed *by the blood of Christ, as of a lamb*. Hence we infer and conclude that the lamb was a type of Christ.

“4. There are prophecies of double senses, which admit no more than two senses, which are nearly of the same kind with typical prophecies, and many of which might perhaps be cleared up, by observing that the prophet meant one thing, and the Spirit of God, who spake by him, meant another thing; for the Holy Spirit so over-ruled the prophets, as to make them use words, which, strictly and rigidly interpreted, could not mean what themselves intended.”<sup>13</sup>

Of these four heads, the first only applies to Matthew's adaptation of the words of the prophets Hosea and Jeremiah, to events in the life of Christ; though some Unitarians, in their zeal against the first two chapters of Matthew, have been ready to reject, as inapplicable to our

---

<sup>13</sup> See Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, edit. 1805, Vol. I. p. 125—130.

Saviour, all prophecies, or application of prophecies, by the Evangelist, which do not come under Jortin's second head. That such a blind or ignorant zeal is not chargeable on the Editors of the Improved Version, appears from their Note on Acts ii. 31.

The only instance adduced by Dr. Jortin, as illustrative of his first head, is from Matt. xiii. 35, which applies the words of the prophet to the occasion, in the same manner as in the second chapter, and, consequently, obviates the objection to such an application in this last chapter.

The author of the second chapter of Matthew's Gospel is further accused of referring to a prophecy which does not exist, when he says, "that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophets, *He shall be called a Nazarene.*" If it does not now exist, it does not follow that it did not exist when Matthew wrote; he might have referred to a traditional, and not a written prophecy. In Heb. xii. 21, we read, that "Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:" these words are not in the present books of Moses. Again, in Jude, ver. 14, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment," &c. The apostle James, in his Epistle, chap. v. 17, says, "Elias was a man, subject to like passions as we are; and he

prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not in the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain," &c. Neither the above prophecy of Enoch, nor this prayer of Elias, is to be found in the present books of the Old Testament. From these passages it appears, that the Jews had, in the days of the apostles, some relations of historical facts, and prophetical declarations, which do not now exist. If we cannot, therefore, at this distance of time, always make out the allusions to the Jewish history, or prophecies, it does not follow that they are incorrect, or that those passages of the New Testament, in which they occur, are not authentic.

Some commentators think that Matthew alludes to no particular prophecy, but to the general language of the prophets, respecting the Messiah, that he should be despised and rejected of men. What makes this probable is, that Matthew does not refer to any particular prophet, but to the prophets [*προφῆτων*] generally. Of this last opinion was the late Dr. Priestley, when he wrote his *Notes on the Books of Scripture*, 1804.—Vol. III. p. 33, he says, “ ‘*He shall be called a Nazarene.*’ This does not refer to any particular passage in any of the prophets, but to the general idea that is given of the Messiah in all the prophets, who speak of him as a man who should be *hated*,

*reviled, persecuted, and afflicted*; and the Hebrew word, from which Nazareth is derived, signifies this, as well as to be *separated*, or sequestered, from other men. And the town of Nazareth itself was both in name and in reality a despised place. See Dr. Hunt's Sermon on this subject."

The preceding observations will, at least, shew that St. Matthew's application of the words of the prophet to Christ, presents no insuperable difficulty, nor affords any rational plea for rejecting, as spurious, the first two chapters of his Gospel.

I have now, I believe, noticed every objection, advanced by the Editors of the Improved Version, as counter-evidence to impugn the external and internal evidence, in favour of the genuineness of the introductory chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. If the intelligent reader impartially weighs the respective evidence offered for his consideration, I can feel no anxiety about his decision.

Notwithstanding the dictatorial and authoritative manner in which the Editors pronounce the introductory chapters of Matthew and Luke to be forgeries, and unworthy of credit, they appear to feel the force of the observation, "that so large and gross an interpolation could not have escaped detection, and would never have been so early and so generally received." They attempt to evade its force, by saying, "This interpolation was not

admitted into the Hebrew copies of Matthew's Gospel, nor into Marcion's copies of Luke;—that it is notorious that forged writings, under the names of the apostles, were in circulation almost from the apostolic age (See 2 Thess. ii. 2);—that the orthodox charge the heretics with corrupting the text, and that the heretics recriminate upon the orthodox:—also, that it was much easier to introduce interpolations when copies were few and scarce, than since they have been multiplied to so great a degree, by means of the press."

It has been proved, in the third chapter of this work, that the Nazarene copy of St. Matthew's Gospel, contained the first two chapters;—that Marcion's Evangelium was not the Gospel of St. Luke, and, therefore, is no evidence in the present inquiry. If there were forged writings in circulation almost from the apostolic age, there is no proof that such writings passed undetected; there is no proof that the portions of Sacred Writ, now under discussion, were forged. As to the primitive Christians, the Editors grant (when such concession appears necessary to their argument) "their solicitude, not to admit any book into the code of the New Testament, of the genuineness of which they had not the clearest evidence<sup>14</sup>;" and their solicitude would, no doubt, extend to the accuracy of the

---

<sup>14</sup> Introduction to the Improved Version, p. viii.



text, so as to prevent the possibility of such gross and extensive forgeries, as the account of the miraculous conception would be, if not genuine.

The observation of the Editors, on the reciprocal accusation of the orthodox and the heretics, with corrupting the text, is founded upon a passage in Tertullian, which limits the observation to himself and Marcion. Now it is well known, and admitted by the Unitarians, that the latter does not give the genuine text of the Sacred Writings; and when the Unitarians produce as clear and decisive evidence of the primitive Christians' tampering with and altering the text of the Scriptures, as appears against Marcion, we may then attend to their insinuations against the orthodox; but, till then, we cannot accept insinuation for evidence.

It appears that it was the custom of the Christian church, from the apostolic age, to read, in their religious assemblies, those writings which they received as the genuine productions of the evangelists and apostles; we may therefore conclude that the churches themselves would be primarily in possession of genuine copies of these writings, and that, if there were a scarcity of copies, this scarcity would apply principally to copies in the possession of individuals, rather than to those in the possession of the churches: and that interpolations would originate in the church itself, will surely not be supposed even by the

Unitarian; no, they must originate with designing individuals, who could only tamper with the copies in their own possession; consequently, the scarcity of copies, under such circumstances, would rather impede than accelerate the corruption of the text. The Editors' allusion to the increase, and consequent security from interpolation, of copies, by means of the press, is in the highest degree trifling, as bearing at all on the present question. They must know that every manuscript and version, for centuries before the discovery of printing, is against them; and it is proved, by the foregoing investigation, that their favourite Marcion, and the Ebionites, afford them no relief against this formidable phalanx of manuscripts and versions.

“And, finally,” conclude these Editors, “that the interpolation in question would, to the generality of Christians, be extremely gratifying, as it would lessen the odium attached to Christianity, from its Founder being a crucified Jew, and would elevate him to the dignity of the heroes and demigods of the heathen mythology.”

Upon the last clause in the above paragraph, well might Dr. Nares, with an honest indignation, exclaim, “Gracious Heaven! elevate the Saviour of the world to the dignity of the heroes and demigods of the heathen mythology!!

“Need any persons, who had the Apocalypse in their hands (a part of Scripture, which the

Editors willingly account genuine), to have forged such an account of the *birth* of Christ, as we have in Matthew and Luke, to have given him a *poor virgin* for his mother, a *small village* for his birth-place, a *stable* for his nursery, and a *manger* for his cradle, in order to lessen the Jewish prejudices, and *raise* him to the rank of a *heathen demi-god*? HE, who declares himself, in another part of Scripture, to be 'the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; unto whom every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and all things in them, ascribe blessing, and glory, and dominion, for ever and ever!' What mythological idol could ever be compared to the Lamb of the Apocalypse, the LORD OF LORDS, and KING OF KINGS? What demi-god of Paganism ever made such an appearance as the WORD OF GOD in the Revelations? I shall take the Editors' own version.

“ ‘ And I saw heaven opened, and, behold, a white horse: and he who sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and with righteousness he judgeth, and maketh war. And his eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns: and he had a name written, which none knoweth but he himself; and he was clothed with a mantle dipped in blood: and his name is called THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies which were in heaven

followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white, and pure. And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, that with it he might smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he shall tread the wine-press of the fierce anger of Almighty God: and he had, on his mantle and on his thigh, a name written, KING of KINGS, and LORD of LORDS!

“What can be said to those, who talk of elevating such a personage to the rank of a heathen demi-god!”<sup>15</sup>

I cannot quit my last extract from the Editors' Note on Luke i. 4, without objecting to their impeachment of the fidelity of the primitive Christians, as guardians of the evangelical and apostolical writings; an impeachment not only without a tittle of evidence to support it, but in direct opposition to the Editors' own express admission of the “primitive Christians' solicitude, not to admit any book into the code of the New Testament, of the genuineness of which they had not the clearest evidence<sup>16</sup>.” Strange to say, the very same Editors, who have given this testimony to their vigilant attention to the integrity of the Sacred Writings, here accuse them of a flagrant breach of the trust reposed in them, and of conniving at a most infamous imposture on the Christian world. If

---

<sup>15</sup> Nares's Remarks on the Improved Version, pp. 38, 39.

<sup>16</sup> Introduction to the Improved Version, § 2, p. viii.

we could, for a moment, entertain this accusation, that which has been hitherto considered as the foundation of the Protestant faith, would prove a sandy foundation; and this faith would be liable to be overthrown by the first blast of wind, by the first descent of rain upon it. Of this, however, there is no danger: the evidence upon which the Sacred Writings stand, will remain unshaken by the imbecile attacks, whether of the infidel or half Christian, and the faith which they inculcate, will triumph over all opposition, because it is built upon a rock, against which the gates of hell will never prevail.

# APPENDIX.



UPON THE

VARIATIONS *between* THE FIRST *and* FOURTH EDITIONS

OF THE

IMPROVED VERSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

## APPENDIX

TABLE I. THE FIRST TWO COLUMNS

## APPENDIX, No. I.

---

*The Editors, in their new Note on Matt. i. 16, refer to Pope on the Miraculous Conception, as containing Proof that the Nazarene Gospel of Matthew did not contain the First Two Chapters—A Review of Mr. Pope's Arguments—His Statement of Epiphanius's Testimony incorrect—Mr. Pope's attempt to prove, that the First Two Chapters of Matthew were not in Jerome's Copy of the Nazarene Gospel, examined—The Editors first misrepresent Dr. Magee's Argument against the Authenticity of the Ebionite Gospel, and then call it "trifling in the extreme"—A Review of the Controversy between them and Dr. Magee.*

THE remarks upon the Unitarian Improved Version of the New Testament, in the preceding pages, being directed to the first edition of that work, it is proposed to note, in this Appendix, the variation, between the fourth edition and the first, so far as such variations bear upon the points under discussion; whereby the reader will be enabled to judge, whether the Editors have, in the fourth edition, profited by the animadversions, friendly or hostile, which have been called forth by the first.



In the Note on Matt. i. 16, the first edition says, "From the testimony of Epiphanius and Jerome, we are sure that they [the last nine verses of the first, and the whole of the second chapter] were wanting in the copies used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites." In the fourth edition, the Editors have modified their assertion, and say, "—from the direct testimony of Epiphanius, and indirectly from that of Jerome, (See Pope on Mir. Concep. p. 93,) we learn that they were wanting in the copies used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites." Let us turn to the work here referred to, and see upon what premises this modified assertion of the Editors is founded.

The Editors refer to page 93; but I shall quote the whole of the passage, beginning at page 91. "Jerome," says Mr. Pope, "who was, perhaps, a better judge in these matters than any of the fathers, except Origen, says expressly, that the Hebrew Gospel of the Nazarenes was that of St. Matthew. Epiphanius himself, the greatest enemy of the Ebionites, acknowledges the same; and even describes this Gospel as having its beginning at the third chapter of the present copies of Matthew."

If the reader turn back to the third chapter of this Work, (p. 92,) he will find that Epiphanius does not describe the Nazarene Gospel as having its beginning at the third chapter; but acknowledges his ignorance of the manner in which this

Gospel began. He will find, (p. 94,) that it is of the Ebionite Gospel that Epiphanius speaks, when he says it began thus, "It came to pass in the days of Herod, king of Judea, that John came baptizing with the baptism of repentance, in the river Jordan, who was reported to be of the family of Aaron the High-priest, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth: and all people went out after him." The third chapter of the present copies of Matthew contains nothing like this. The blundering commencement of the Ebionite Gospel, appears to be borrowed, in part, at least, from Luke; if any part of it is taken from Matthew, it is taken from the second, and not from the third chapter. This passage of Epiphanius, as given in Chap. III. of this work, No. 3, contains nearly all, I believe, that he has said, with respect to the beginning of the Ebionite Gospel, which he describes as corrupted and curtailed; which remark cannot apply to the Nazarene Gospel, which the said Epiphanius represents as most entire.

Jerome undoubtedly calls the Nazarene Gospel the Hebrew copy of Matthew's Gospel; but, unless Jerome considered this copy as uncorrupt and unmutated, which it is certain he did not, (and which the Editors will scarcely venture to say he did,) his testimony cannot be adduced to prove the integrity of the Nazarene Gospel.

"To these," continues Mr. Pope, "may be added another testimony, which, as it is drawn from fact,

appears to have no small force attending it. Jerome, in his Commentary on Matt. ii. 6, gives the plainest intimation that the Nazarene copy, in his possession, had not that part which relates to the miraculous conception. Speaking of the words, *And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda*, which, according to him, were read in the common copies then extant, *and thou, Bethlehem, in the land of JUDEA*, he makes the following remark:—‘ I am of opinion, that the reading which came from the evangelist, was, as in the Hebrew itself, (that is, the Hebrew of *Micah*, from whom the prophecy was taken,) *Judæ*, and not *Judæa*.’ On which passage Dr. Mill observes, that Jerome could not have had in his possession the Nazarene Gospel; for, if he had, there would have been no occasion for a mere conjecture; and this would have been a perfectly just conclusion, if Jerome had not plainly declared the contrary, and confirmed this declaration by having actually had recourse to this Gospel in more places than one. In this, however, he is obliged to have recourse to conjecture only. What is the natural conclusion? Certainly this:—that, with respect to the verse in question, the copy of the Nazarene Gospel, which Jerome had, is totally silent.—The plain language of this father’s observation, therefore, is, that the Nazarene Gospel did not contain this supposed part of Scripture; and, consequently,—the Nazarene Gospel itself had not,

even in the time of Jerome, the narrative of this event, any more than that of the Ebionites.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Mill has fallen into two errors:—1st, He has mistaken the sense of the passage he quotes from Jerome:—2d, He reasons on the Nazarene Gospel, as though it were a correct transcript of the original of St. Matthew; or, at least, considered as such by Jerome. Expunge these two errors, and the inference which is drawn from them is destroyed. Mr. Pope endeavours to make the most of the authority which Dr. Mill’s name carries with it, as that of an eminent critic; but mere authority, unless supported by sound argument, will go but a little way towards solving a critical question; and the eagerness with which Mr. Pope draws his conclusions from premises, which, in a note, he acknowledges to be erroneous, does not indicate that cool and impartial investigation which a disinterested search after truth inspires. In the note just alluded to, Mr. Pope attempts so to correct what he acknowledges to be erroneous in Dr. Mill’s construction of the passage which he has quoted from Jerome, as to arrive at the same conclusion. This note, therefore, calls for our consideration.

“ Dr. Mill,” says Mr. Pope, “ is mistaken, in referring the phrase *in ipso Hebraico*, to the Hebrew of Micah: it rather refers to the Hebrew of the Old Testament in general, and to the Book of Joshua

---

<sup>1</sup> Pope on the Mirac. Concept. p. 91—101.

in particular ; as is evident from Jerome's own words, whose reference to Micah is not in this, but in the last sentence. ' Putamus enim ab evangelista primum editum, sicut in *ipso Hebraico* legimus, Judæ, non Judææ. Quæ est enim aliarum gentium Bethlehem, ut ad distinctionem hic Judææ poneretur? Judæ enim idcirco scribitur, quia est et alia Bethlehem in Galilæa. Lege *librum Jesu Filii Nane*. Denique et in ipso testimonio quod de Michææ prophetia scriptum est, ita habet, et tu, Bethlehem, terra Judæ,' (in Matt. c. ii.) There are in Joshua two passages, (xx. 7, xxi. 11,) in which mention is made of the mountain or hill country of Judah ; and another (xix. 15) in which Bethlehem (which must be the Galilean Bethlehem referred to here) is spoken of as belonging to the lot of Zebulun. From these, Jerome draws his remark ; which, indeed, is an erroneous one : for though Judea may, in common language, take in the whole of the land of Canaan, there is no reason why a particular district of it may not be called by the same name. Indeed, in the Old Testament itself, *Judah* is frequently used in both senses. Why then may not Judea, which is nothing more than Judah grecized, be so too? The passages of the Old Testament, in which Judah, the district so called, is found, are very numerous. Bethlehem-Judah is mentioned, Judg. xvii. 7, xix. 1, and elsewhere. That *in ipso Hebraico* can mean nothing but the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, is manifest also from

the very last sentence, where *ipsum Hebraicum* must be supplied, to give sense to the verb *habet*. *Michæas* would not serve the purpose, because the whole design of the passage is to shew what was the reading of the *Hebrew*."

Before I make any remark on this note of Mr. Pope's, I will give a literal translation of the passage from Jerome, which forms the subject of it; supplying, between bracket, what seems wanting to make the sense complete.—“For we think it was first written by the evangelist, as we read in the Hebrew [Gospel] itself *of Judah*, not *of Judea*; for where is there a Bethlehem in any other country, that, for the sake of distinction *of Judea*, should be here put? *Of Judah*, is therefore the genuine reading, because there is another Bethlehem in Galilee. Read the Book of Joshua, the son of Nave. Lastly, even in the very testimony which is adduced from the prophecy of Micah [the Hebrew Gospel itself] has it thus: And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah.”

In the latter part of this translation, I have, agreeably to Mr. Pope's suggestion, supplied the nominative case to the verb *habet*, by the insertion of *ipsum Hebraicum*. The obvious design of Jerome, in this passage, is not to ascertain the reading of any particular copy or version of Matthew's Gospel, in chap. ii. 5; but to determine whether the evangelist *originally* wrote *Bethlehem of Judah*, or *Bethlehem of Judea*.

When we consider, that the words “ And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,” occur no where, either in the Old or New Testament, except in Matt. ii. 6, and that Jerome had the Nazarene Hebrew Gospel before him, as well as the received Greek text of Matthew ; that he has, in another place, designated the Nazarene Gospel by the phrase *ipsum Hebraicum*<sup>2</sup>, (see chap. iii. p. 96,) we are necessarily led to the above construction of the passage under consideration ; a construction adopted by Mr. Jeremiah Jones, Dr. Lardner, Michaelis, and Dr. Marsh. See chap. iii. of this Work, and Marsh’s Michaelis, vol. iii. Part I. chap. iv. § 9, and Marsh’s Notes, vol. iii. Part II. The Nazarene Gospel was too corrupt for its evidence to convert Jerome’s conjecture into certainty, yet not so corrupt that its evidence should be entirely rejected on a critical question, which involved no doctrinal disputed point. Jerome therefore appeals to its evidence on the point he wished to establish ; a point on which a general reference to the Old Testament could afford no proof whatever : Jerome only refers to Joshua, as his authority

---

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Pope admits, that in this passage, the phrase *ipsum Hebraicum*, means the Gospel of the Nazarenes, (See his Mirac. Concept. p. 91, Note †) ; and yet, in the same Note, p. 95, denies that this meaning can attach to the very same phrase, when used by Jerome, in his Commentary on St. Matthew, because, in other parts of this Commentary, Jerome has also distinguished the Nazarene Gospel by the phrase *Evangelium quod vocatur secundum Hebræos*.

for saying, that there was a Bethlehem in Galilee. See Josh. xix. 15.

Thus, the passage which Mr. Pope has produced from Jerome, as an indirect, but conclusive proof of the silence of the Nazarene Gospel, with respect to the first two chapters of the present copies of Matthew's Gospel, proves their existence in that Gospel: and Dr. Priestley was not mistaken, as Mr. Pope says he was, "in the idea, that Jerome's Nazarene copy contained the second chapter of Matthew."<sup>3</sup>

But if we grant Mr. Pope the sense which he would attach to the passage cited from Jerome; does it therefore follow, that the first two chapters of Matthew were wanting in the Nazarene Gospel? No: if its evidence were not favourable to his position, he was not likely to refer to it; and if it were, it would have only added one to the "other instances to the same purpose," adverted to by Dr. Mill, "which shew, indeed, plainly enough," as Mr. Pope remarks, p. 98, "that Jerome did not make so much use as he might of the Nazarene Gospel;" but afford no more proof that it did not contain the first two chapters of Matthew, than that Jerome was not possessed of the Gospel itself.

The following passage is inserted by the Editors of the Improved Version, in their fourth edition of

---

<sup>3</sup> Pope on the Mirac. Concept. p. 100, Note.



the Note on Matt. i. 16:—"The objection, so much insisted upon, that the authority of the Ebionites is to be admitted *indiscriminately*, because their testimony is appealed to in a *particular* case, is trifling in the extreme."

This is all that the Editors have considered necessary to say in reply to the various objections which have been made to their appeal to the Ebionite Gospel, as an authority for rejecting, as spurious, the narration of the miraculous conception in Matthew's Gospel. This argument is most laboured by a *Calm Inquirer*, in answer to Dr. Magee; and from the importance thus attached to it by the highest Unitarian authority, it calls for a notice which its intrinsic merit would not otherwise have deserved: I shall therefore review this *Calm Inquirer's* attempt to support the Editors' Ebionite evidence, against the attack of Dr. Magee.

"It is an obvious objection," says the *Calm Inquirer*, "to the supposition of the spuriousness of these chapters, that they are contained in all the manuscripts of the New Testament, and in all the ancient versions. This objection the Editors repel, by stating, that though they are to be found in all manuscripts which now exist, they were wanting in manuscripts which were much older than any of these; viz. in the copies of the Ebionite or Jewish Christians, and of Marcion, who lived in the second century; that these Christians asserted their copies to be genuine; and that they held no opinions

inconsistent with the miraculous conception of Jesus, or that should have led them voluntarily to expunge these chapters out of the evangelical history.”

I must just suspend my quotation at this place, to make an observation *en passant*, on the latter part of this paragraph. Does not *A Calm Inquirer*, in the second column of the page, whence the above passage is taken, say, that the Ebionites believed “Jesus was the legitimate son of Joseph, by Mary, his lawful wife, both of whom were descended from the royal house of David?” Do not the Editors of the Improved Version say, “If the account of the miraculous conception of Jesus be true, he could not be the offspring of David and of Abraham, from whom it was predicted, and by the Jews expected, that the Messiah should descend?” Does not Mr. Belsham say, of Marcion, “He supposed Jesus Christ to be a Spirit sent by the Supreme Being, to rescue mankind from vice and misery; that he appeared in the form of a man, but was not really such; and that he did not visit the world till the commencement of his public ministry, in the fifteenth year of Tiberius<sup>4</sup>?”—In direct contradiction to these Unitarian statements, we are told, and by a *Calm Inquirer* too, that the Ebionites and Marcion “held no opinions inconsistent with the doctrine of the miraculous conception.” Such

---

<sup>4</sup> Belsham's Summary View of the Bishop of St. David's Memorial, p. 126.

incongruities, such contradictory assertions, only require to be pointed out: they contain their own refutation.

To return to our Calm Inquirer: he continues, "Now, how does the learned writer rebut this reply? It is by an assumption most extraordinary. You have no right to avail yourself of any testimony in *any* case, if you do not receive the same testimony in *every* case! This is, in fact, the foundation of the learned Professor's reasoning, and a most extravagant principle it is; such, I believe, as will not go down at Glasgow, whatever it may do at Dublin."

The most extraordinary assumption with which a Calm Inquirer makes himself so merry, is not the assumption of Dr. Magee: he shall speak for himself. "With respect to the passage in Matthew, they tell us, that the *Ebionites* did not read the two first chapters in their copy of his Gospel; and, with respect to St. Luke, they tell us, that *Marcion*, a heretic of the second century, did not admit the two first chapters of his Gospel. Therefore it follows, that since the sect of the *Ebionites*, and the heretic *Marcion* of the second century, are against all the manuscripts and all the versions, it is impossible that these last can be received as true. The argument is certainly quite intelligible. But let us inquire a little about these irrefragable witnesses. And, first, as to these *Ebionites*, we are informed that their canon of the New Testament

rejected the three last Gospels, and all the Epistles of St. Paul. And next, as to this *Marcion*, we find, that he rejected the Old Testament, and every part of the New which contained quotations from the Old, and that he received no Gospel but that of St. Luke, expunging from this also whatever he did not approve; and we are told these things, too, upon the very authority on which the Editors build, respecting the omissions from St. Matthew and St. Luke. Why, then, have not these admirers of *Marcion* and the *Ebionites* received the testimony of such unimpeached witnesses throughout? Why have they not, on the authority of the latter, rejected all the New Testament, except St. Matthew; or, on the authority of the former, rejected the entire of the Old Testament, and all of the New, excepting a part of St. Luke, and some of the Epistles; or, on the authority of both together, why have they not rejected the whole Bible, both Old and New Testament? But it seems, that these witnesses are to be brought up and turned down at pleasure; they are both good and bad, according as may serve the present purpose. For not only do we find, that they are not believed by the party producing them, in any part of their testimony, except that which relates to the beginnings of the two Gospels; but we find, that even in these they are believed only so far as is convenient; our Editors themselves admitting, that the *Ebionites* had mutilated the Gospel of St. Matthew, by *taking*

away the *genealogy*; that is, by taking away the first sixteen verses of the first chapter: and, therefore, respecting these first sixteen verses, the Editors reject the testimony of the *Ebionites*, as being convicted of a mutilation of the Gospel; but as to the remaining verses of the first chapter, and the whole of the second, they hold the testimony of these same *Ebionites* to be good against all gainsayers, against all manuscripts, and against all versions. All this is put forward honestly, and without any attempt at disguise. The Ebionite witnesses pronounced on one side of a leaf, as not credible, from their acknowledged mutilation of the Sacred Text, and upon the other side of the same leaf, maintained to be witnesses of such repute, as ought to be relied upon, in opposition to all manuscripts, and all the versions of the New Testament in the whole world<sup>5</sup>."

The argument of the above passage is obviously this. Since the Editors consider the *Ebionites* and *Marcion* such unimpeached witnesses on the integrity of the Scripture text, as to have their testimony opposed to all the manuscripts and versions of the New Testament, why have not the Editors received their testimony on this one point throughout? Our *Calm Inquirer* knew, that to answer this question honestly, would be to convict the Editors' favourite witnesses of mutilating and

---

<sup>5</sup> Magee on Atonement, &c., vol. ii. p. 451 to 453, Note.

corrupting the text of the New Testament, and to destroy their credit. He therefore converts Dr. Magee's question into an affirmative proposition, which, by changing Dr. Magee's argument, gives it a meaning not deducible from his words, and thus supplies himself with a subject upon which to display his criticism.

After an absurd attempt to make the rejection of the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John, and the Epistles of Paul by the Ebionites, a pledge for their fidelity in preserving from mutilation the Gospel of Matthew, our *Calm Inquirer* returns to Dr. Magee, and represents him as asking the following question: — “ But, says the learned Professor, will you not, upon the same authority, reject the remaining Gospels and Paul's Epistles? I answer, *no*. What! says the learned Professor, ‘ are the Ebionite witnesses pronounced on one side of the leaf not credible, and on the other witnesses of such repute as to be relied upon in opposition to *all* manuscripts and versions in the whole world?’ I answer, *yes*; because, in the one case, I see reason to concur with them, and, in the other, to differ from them; and I believe I have good grounds for this discrimination.”

That the Editors and *A Calm Inquirer* see reason for concurring with the Ebionites in the one case, and differing from them in the other, no one will dispute. If they had given us this reason, we then

could have judged whether they had "good grounds for this discrimination." The learned Professor's question is not, "But will you not, upon the same authority?" but, "Why will ye not, &c." Rather than answer a question so reasonable, but somewhat puzzling, *A Calm Inquirer* finds it expedient to alter the question, and put it in a form which more conveniently admits of an answer by the monosyllable, *No*.

The latter part of the passage which I have just quoted from *A Calm Inquirer*, presents "an instance of extreme disingenuousness." Every reader of *A Calm Inquirer* could not but conclude, that the argument of Dr. Magee, as there quoted, referred to the other Gospels, and to St. Paul's Epistles. If the reader turns to my extract from Dr. Magee, he will see that *A Calm Inquirer* has omitted the words, "from their acknowledged mutilation of the Sacred Text;" he will also see, from the context, (which is wisely kept out of view,) that the words thus omitted, as well as the whole paragraph, allude, not to the other Gospels and St. Paul's Epistles, but to the first sixteen verses of the first chapter of Matthew, which the Editors, in their Note on Matt. i. 1, inform us that the Ebionites had taken away from their copy of Matthew's Gospel; yet, in the very next page of the Improved Version, on the other side of the leaf, the testimony of these same Ebionites is urged as undeniable evidence for

rejecting the authenticity of the remainder of the first, and the whole of the second chapter of Matthew, "in opposition to all the manuscripts and all the versions in the whole world." The evidence of the Ebionites being thus, *on the very same leaf, both rejected and received, as bad and as good, upon the first chapter of Matthew's Gospel*, is the objection so much insisted upon, and which neither *A Calm Inquirer*, nor the *Editors*, have found it convenient to meet.

*A Calm Inquirer* having made Dr. Magee to say just so much, and no more, as he is pleased, not daring to trust his reader with one fair quotation from him, lest he should comprehend the real state of the argument, proceeds in the following triumphant strain:

"We should make fine work of ancient history, if this Dublin Professor's principle is to be admitted; believe *all* or *none*, without discrimination. Livy relates, that Hannibal crossed the Alps, and beat the Romans, at the battle of Cannæ; and I believe him. The same Livy tells us, that an ox spoke; but I believe him not. What! (says one educated in the school of our Dublin Professor) is Livy pronounced on one side of the leaf to be credible, and on the other incredible? Is a witness to be brought up and down at pleasure? Is he good and bad, as may serve the purpose? If such reasoning satisfies the learned gentleman; if he cannot be content to believe the battle of Cannæ,



without believing likewise that the ox spoke ; he has my free consent to believe as much as he pleases : only let him permit *us*, on this side of the water, to exercise a little common sense in judging of a report, and to discriminate what is worthy of belief, from what appears to be incredible in the works of the same author.”<sup>6</sup>

Such is the substance of what *A Calm Inquirer* has advanced in answer to Dr. Magee. In the year 1816, Dr. Magee has, in the fourth edition of his *Discourses on Atonement and Sacrifice*, rebutted the attack made on him by this *Calm Inquirer*, and has ably exposed the futility of the parallel which he has drawn between Livy’s history and the Ebionites’ Gospel, upon which Dr. M. makes the following judicious remarks :

“ The two cases, confounded together as similar, are manifestly at direct variance in *every* point of comparison. The testimony of the *Ebionites* relates, 1, to *one* fact—the faithfulness of the transcript of a certain written record ;—2, it is assumed to speak of this transcript from actual knowledge ;—and, 3, it pronounces, upon the whole of the transcript, with equal positiveness throughout. The testimony of the historian, on the contrary, relates, 1, to *two* facts, distinct and unconnected ;—2, it refers but to the reports of these facts, derived from others ;—and, 3, it speaks

---

<sup>6</sup> Monthly Repository, vol. viii. p. 491—493.

of these facts in terms widely different, as to the credit attached to them by the historian. Yet the advocate of the Unitarians sees these two cases so completely identified, that, if Livy's report of the one fact can reasonably be deemed credible, whilst his report of the other is considered to be incredible; it follows, he thinks, of necessary consequence, that the *Ebionites* may, at the same time, be received as credible, and rejected as incredible, respecting different parts of the transcript, the fidelity of the whole of which they attest.

“ But the grand parent blunder of all, consists in confounding the *genuineness of the record*, with the *truth of the facts* recorded. If, indeed, this CALM INQUIRER had, in this happy comparison between *Livy* and the *Ebionites*, pronounced, that, as he could not believe that the *ox spoke*, therefore the part of *Livy's* history, which contained the report of that fact, could not be genuine, he would then have said something which bore upon the question; or if, instead of relating the two facts of the *battle of Cannæ* and the *speaking of the ox*, *Livy* had professed to have given both these relations, as a transcript from *Fabius Pictor*, or some other ancient historian, and that it could be proved, with respect to the latter of the two, that he had falsified as to its being a part of the ancient document, whilst it remained to be inferred from his authority, whether the former were contained in it or not: our critic would, indeed, have a case

parallel to the one in question, whatever might be the fruits of the similitude; but, by an extraordinary confusion of brain, (instanced, very frequently, in writings bearing the same signature with this Unitarian pamphlet,) matters, totally dissonant, are blended together as one; and, as in the example of the blind man reasoning upon objects of sight, the nature of scarlet colour is deduced from the sound of a trumpet.

“ However, had this writer been able to arrive at his own meaning, he would have found it to be this, which may be discovered, moving in a confused and muddy stream, through all that he has said: —that the reason why he and the *Editors* believe the *Ebionites*, when they reject that part of the first two chapters of St. Matthew, which contains the account of the miraculous conception, and do not believe them when they reject the part which contains the genealogy, is, that they cannot admit the story of the miraculous conception, which wars with their system, to be credible; whilst the account of the genealogy, which they conceive to accord with that system, they have no objection to believe. That is, in truth, they determine what is genuine in Scripture, and what is not, by its accordance and repugnance to their system; whilst they profess to derive their system from what is genuine in Scripture.<sup>7</sup>”

---

<sup>7</sup> Magee on Atonement, &c. vol. ii. Part II. p. 742—744.

The preceding extracts from Dr. Magee present a specimen of the manner in which he conducts his controversy with the Editors of the Improved Version: by them the intelligent reader can judge, whether Dr. M.'s strictures contain more of argument or of "virulent declaration." Mr. Belsham has professed to repel Dr. Magee's strictures on the Editors of the Improved Version; but the arguments in the last extract from Dr. M. have met with no other reply from Mr. B., than what is contained in such animadversions as the following:—that they are "wholly deficient in precision, in elegance, in perspicuity, in urbanity, in liberality of spirit, in comprehension of views, in every quality which is requisite to constitute excellence in composition;" that they are "full of vanity, of pedantry, of peddling criticism, of unprovoked abuse, of improved accusation, of foul and malignant calumny<sup>8</sup>." Neither Dr. Magee's "*utmost malice*," nor his "*unparalleled malignity*," nor "*the art and venom of his criticism*," nor his "*most vulgar and contumelious railing*,"<sup>9</sup> has supplied him with flowers of rhetoric to compare with these specimens furnished by his opponent. The reader of Dr. Magee may look with amazement and wonder; but such, indeed, is the mild and Christian language applied by Mr. Belsham to Dr. Magee.

---

<sup>8</sup> Monthly Repository, vol. xii. p. 151; or, The Bampton Lecturer Reproved, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 173—176.

“I must just notice,” says *A Calm Inquirer*, “an instance of extreme disingenuousness in the passage cited above. [See the conclusion of the first extract I have given from Dr. M. p. 322.] Dr. Magee represents the Editors of the Improved Version, as maintaining that ‘the Ebionite witnesses ought to be relied upon in *opposition* to all the manuscripts, and all the versions of the New Testament in the whole world.’ The learned Professor knew, or ought to have known, that there is no *opposition* at all in the evidence, as stated by the Editors. He knew, or ought to have known, that they admitted that the disputed chapters were to be found in all existing manuscripts. And he knew, or ought to have known, that the sole object of the Editors, in citing the Ebionites and Marcion, was to shew that these chapters were wanting in manuscripts which were much older than any now existing; and that the possessors of these manuscripts maintained that they were genuine, and not corrupt copies. Whether the earlier or the later manuscripts are most authentic, is quite a different question<sup>10</sup>.”

Dr. Magee’s statement is plain and intelligible, and would mislead no one not totally uninformed in biblical criticism; he would know that Dr. M. could only advert to existing MSS. and versions, consequently his words do not pervert the meaning

---

<sup>10</sup> Monthly Repository, vol. viii. p. 493.

of the Editors; neither is he chargeable with any disingenuousness. If Dr. Magee have erred at all, it is in favour of the Editors; for, strictly speaking, their appeal is not to the Ebionite witnesses, but to Epiphanius's report of the Ebionite Gospel; and unless the existing MSS. of Epiphanius's work, containing this report, are older than any of the existing Greek MSS. of St. Matthew's Gospel, and this is highly improbable, the Editors' appeal is to MSS. of a more recent date than those adverted to by Dr. Magee. Thus, so far are the Editors from referring to MSS. of St. Matthew's Gospel—"much older than any now existing"—they do not refer to any manuscript at all of that Gospel, but only to Epiphanius's report of what he read in the Ebionite Hebrew Gospel, which said report proves, that this said Gospel was not the genuine Gospel of Matthew; neither does it appear, that the Ebionites ever contended that it was. This report cannot, therefore, assist us to ascertain whether the Gospel of Matthew should begin with the present first or third chapter; but, if it could, I object to the use made of it by *A Calm Inquirer*, as deceptive, and "extremely disingenuous." He has artfully confounded the evidence in favour of the integrity of the text of the New Testament, derived from the MSS. and versions, with that derived from the fathers, through citations from the Sacred Records, to be found in their works. The former evidence entirely fails the Editors, as there

is no manuscript nor version of the Ebionite Gospel existing. Of the latter, the earliest citations from the Ebionite Gospel are those in the works of Epiphanius. I say the earliest, because the Hebrew Nazarene Gospel, as cited by Jerome, contained the narrative in the first two chapters of Matthew; and the quotations from the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, in the works of the earlier Fathers, correspond with the Nazarene copy. This earliest testimony, therefore, carries us no higher than to the latter part of the fourth century. That the testimony of the Fathers, in favour of our present Greek text of Matthew's Gospel, carries us much higher, even near to the apostolic age, has been proved in the second chapter of this work; and the MSS. read by them, reasonably claim a higher antiquity than MSS. read by Epiphanius nearly three centuries afterwards.

Thus, whether we consult the voice of antiquity, through the medium of MSS. and versions, or through the medium of the works of the Fathers, it is decidedly in favour of the received text of St. Matthew's Gospel. What *A Calm Inquirer* means, when he says, "The learned Professor knew, or ought to have known, that there is no opposition at all in the evidence, as stated by the Editors," I cannot comprehend; the evidence of the Ebionite Gospel, as reported by Epiphanius, is certainly adduced by them in opposition to all the existing MSS. and versions of St. Matthew's Gospel; and

this is all that Dr. Magee could be understood to intend in the passage that has given so much offence to *A Calm Inquirer*. Dr. M. might have gone further : he might have said, that the Editors want us, in effect, to rely upon the evidence of Epiphanius's report of the Ebionite Gospel, in opposition to the Hebrew Nazarene Gospel, to all the MSS. and versions in the whole world, and in opposition to all the Fathers, from the apostolic age. When *A Calm Inquirer*, or the Editors, can produce one single manuscript of the Gospel of St. Matthew, whether in Hebrew or Greek, that has not the first two chapters, we may then examine its claims to compete with every other manuscript and version in the whole world.



## APPENDIX, No. II.

---

*The Editors, in their new Note on Luke i. 4, correct their former assertion, that Marcion contended, that his Evangelium "was a correct and authentic copy" of St. Luke's Gospel; but they nevertheless assert, that "his Gospel was undoubtedly that of Luke"—The Editors herein desert Marcion, to whose testimony they appeal—Their assertion also controverted by Mr. Belsham—Animadversion on Mr. Belsham's attempt to raise the authority of Marcion's Evangelium, by depreciating the Evidence upon which our Canonical Gospels are received as genuine and authentic—Also upon a similar attempt made by the Editors, in a new Note, pp. vi. vii. of their Introduction—Mr. Belsham's inconsistent Assertions—Remarks on a new Hypothesis mentioned by the Editors, for retaining, as authentic, the whole of the First Two Chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, and on the Editors' Reasons for rejecting it.*

THE Editors, in their Note on Luke i. 4, in their first edition, say, "The two first chapters of this Gospel were wanting in the copies used by Marcion, a reputed heretic of the second century; who, though he is represented by his adversaries as holding some extravagant opinions, was a man of learning and integrity, for any thing that appears to

the contrary. He, like some moderns, rejected all the evangelical histories, excepting Luke, of which he contended that his own was a correct and authentic copy."

In their fourth edition, for the foregoing, the Editors have substituted the following:—"The first and second chapters of this Gospel were wanting in the copies used by Marcion, a reputed heretic, who flourished very early in the second century. His Gospel was undoubtedly that of Luke, though he does not mention the evangelist's name; and he maintains its antiquity, authenticity, and integrity. Marcion was one of those, who, being ashamed of the simplicity of the Gospel, blended it with the wild speculations of an erroneous philosophy. But his character was unimpeached, even by his bitterest enemies, till it was calumniated by Epiphanius, 200 years after his death. He is accused by his enemies of mutilating and corrupting the Scriptures. The falsehood of many of the charges alleged by Epiphanius, is exposed by Dr. Lardner. But, at any rate, it would be, the most egregious trifling, to argue, that those who appeal to the testimony of Marcion in a particular case, are bound to follow him in all the eccentricities of his opinions."

This corrected Note wants yet further correction, before it will approximate to the truth, as may be seen by a reference to Chap. iii. p. 115—121 of this Work, where the merits of Marcion's

Evangelium are investigated. Whatever use Marcion might have made of the Gospel of Luke, in forming his Evangelium, he and his followers were too conscious of its variations from that Gospel, to risk their reputation, by claiming Luke as its author; which, otherwise, they would no doubt gladly have done: and the Editors would have evinced their good sense, had they so far followed the example of Marcion, as not to attempt to impose on the Christian world Marcion's Evangelium, as the Gospel of St. Luke.

I do not complain because the Editors have not followed Marcion in all the eccentricities of his opinions, but that they desert him in the particular case in which they profess to follow him. They claim Luke as the author of the Gospel adopted by Marcion. Marcion made no such claim; and his followers represent this Gospel as written partly by Christ himself, and partly by the apostle Paul. The Editors are at liberty to adopt or reject the latter opinion; but we have a right to insist, that they do not say more than Marcion himself, on the one point, with respect to which they profess to appeal to his testimony; and then the Evangelium of Marcion will be left to stand or fall by its own intrinsic merits, without any attempt to prop it up by the authority that would attach to the name of St. Luke as its author.

But, say the Editors, "his Gospel was undoubtedly that of Luke." Whence do they

derive this information? We are certain that it is not from Marcion. This they acknowledge themselves, in their corrected Note; though, with a strange inconsistency and pertinacity, they persevere in claiming a right to appeal to the testimony of Marcion. The conduct of the Editors is indeed inexplicable; for Mr. Belsham, the principal Editor, has, in his Reply to the Bishop of St. David, explicitly declared Marcion's Evangelium to be a compilation of his own, and not the Gospel of St. Luke;—but Mr. Belsham shall speak for himself.

“ Before the canon was settled in its present form, it is probable, not to say certain, that different histories of Christ, of greater or less authenticity, were in circulation; and it is more than probable, that different copies of the same history, more or less perfect, were also extant, which all had their approvers; and no doubt every one would select that history which was most favourable to his own system, and would regard it as most authentic. In course of time, and before the conclusion of the second century, the four histories now contained in the New Testament were selected as canonical, and the rest are called apocryphal. Not that they were altogether fabulous, but by way of distinction from the canonical books. Marcion lived before the canon was formed. And he selected one of the narratives then in circulation; biassed, no doubt, in his choice, as he naturally and unavoidably would be, by an unperceived prejudice

in favour of his own system; and very probably adding or omitting, upon the authority of other copies, what he thought might be necessary to make that which he selected more perfect, and to supersede the necessity of receiving more histories than one. Thus forming what he calls an Evangelium, or an epitome of the evangelical history, according to his views of it, exactly upon the principle upon which Luke professes to have formed his own. This is the more probable, as Marcion does not attribute his copy to any particular author, at the same time that he contends for its being an authentic history of Christ. This Tertullian is ingenuous enough to allow. 'I say,' says the honest polemic, 'that mine is the true copy; Marcion, that his is true. I affirm that Marcion's copy is adulterated; he, that mine is. Who shall decide between us?' It appears, from the testimony of Irenæus and Tertullian, that the history, of which Marcion made the principal use, was that of Luke, in which he made such additions and alterations as, in his judgment, were expedient, and warranted by competent authority. He did not pretend to pass off his Evangelium as the Gospel of Luke; but his orthodox reviewers, finding that Luke was his principal authority, rate him most unmercifully for every passage in which he deviates from what they choose to represent as his original, as if he were a voluntary falsifier and corrupter of Luke's text. The liberties which

Marcion exercised in forming this eclectic Gospel, would not indeed be tolerated in modern times. But when the apocryphal Gospels, to which Luke alludes in his preface, were in circulation, and, previously to the formation of the canon, it became almost necessary for every person to make the best selection he could from the different copies which were afloat. And even the canonical Gospels themselves, whenever and by whomsoever they were assorted in their present form, for that cannot now be ascertained, though no doubt in the main genuine, have very much the appearance of having been tampered with in a similar manner, and of being lengthened by interpolations which did not exist in the original copies.”<sup>1</sup>

I have quoted this passage entire, because the fourth edition of the Improved Version has a new note, page vi. of the Introduction, of a very similar complexion: it indeed bears the marks of being the production of the same pen. Be this as it may, I shall, in my remarks, keep my eye on the arguments, or rather conjectures, contained in the Note of the Editors, as well as those contained in the preceding extract from Mr. Belsham.

In Acts ii. 42, of the primitive believers, it is said, “ And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship.” And afterwards, when the church was extended to countries remote

---

<sup>1</sup> Appendix to a Discourse, &c., being a Reply to the Bishop of St. David’s Brief Memorial, p. 121—124.

from Jerusalem, and some men attempted to impose upon the Gentile believers the yoke of the Jewish ritual, Paul and Barnabas were deputed by the church at Antioch, to go to Jerusalem, to have the point in dispute decided by the apostles and elders there. Thus we see that, whilst the apostles were living, they would prevent any false doctrines being obtruded upon the church. Now let us turn our view from this authentic account of the apostolic church, to that presented to us by Mr. Belsham. So far from being drawn from the sketch given us by Luke, it has not one feature which bears the least resemblance to it. It more accords with that state of insubordination described in Judges, when it is said, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Dissonance of sentiment is described as prevailing among the primitive Christians; and different histories of Christ, composed of discordant materials, to suit this difference of sentiment, are represented as being afloat; and every one as selecting "that history which was most favourable to his own system." Instead of the believers continuing steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, here is disunion and intestine jar and discord. To what ecclesiastical record Mr. Belsham is indebted for his sketch of the primitive church, he does not inform us; until he does, we must reject what he has advanced, to raise the credit of apocryphal writings; and through them the Evangelium of Marcion, as

a calumny upon the primitive church, unsupported by any thing that we read in ecclesiastical antiquity. I do not mean to deny that there were, even in the apostolic age, those who, whilst they claimed the name of Christian, refused to receive the doctrine, or submit to the authority of the apostles; but then these were separated from the church, and to such the apostle John probably alludes, when he says, "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." 1 John ii. 19. These separatists, or heretics, cannot therefore be considered as part of the primitive apostolic church, notwithstanding all the laborious endeavours of Mr. Belsham and his brother Editors, from a kind of sympathetic feeling, to make them appear as such. We do not read of any apocryphal Gospels being propagated by these early heretics. We know that, subsequently to the apostolic age, attempts were made to circulate apocryphal Gospels. Of these attempts, that of Marcion is almost the only one, of the author of which we have any certain information. I say nothing of the Nazarene Hebrew Gospel, because it appears to have been only a corrupt version of St. Matthew's Gospel.

The Editors, in their Introduction to the fourth edition, pp. vi. vii. say, that it is generally understood, that the evangelists availed themselves of



documents which were already in circulation. It will be sufficient to observe, 1st, That all such understanding is hypothetical. 2d, That such hypothesis presupposes those documents to have been, so far as they went, correct and authentic, and accordant with the present text of our Gospels. The Editors further remark, "And it cannot be doubted, that many who could not afford, or who had, no opportunity to procure all the Gospels, might very innocently, and with the very best intentions, endeavour to enrich their own copy, whether of Matthew, Mark, or Luke, from the documents then in circulation, some of which were authentic, and others not. Nor would they, in this selection, always exercise a sound discretion. They would probably be particularly partial to those documents which, by exalting the person of Christ, would diminish in their estimation the disgrace of the cross, and alleviate the scandal which arose from their being disciples of a crucified Jew. Hence the prefatory chapters of Matthew and Luke, which were forged very early, (for they are alluded to by Marcion, who wrote before Justin, and are treated by him with the most contemptuous ridicule, See Suet. de Carn. Chr. Sect. 2), might nevertheless be regarded by a great body of Gentile believers as genuine and true; and as very valuable additions to their own copies of Matthew and Luke. And these, being very generally received before the canon was formed, would, of

course, be admitted into it as portions of the genuine Gospels."

Of these remarks of the Editors, it may be said, that they attempt to impose upon us the wild product of their own irregular fancies, as the result of critical research and investigation. I challenge them to produce a single ancient Christian writer or historian, in support of their *injuriously* insinuations against the *apostolic* church. I say *injuriously*, because that conduct which, to give an air of probability to it, they describe as *innocent*, and as proceeding from *the very best intentions*, would have been nothing short of a pious forgery; it would have been impressing with apostolical authority, narratives that were known to have no such claims. What the primitive Christians thought of such forgeries, may be seen by their conduct towards the author of *the Acts of Paul and Thecla*, who was degraded from his rank of Presbyter, though he pleaded, as an excuse for his forgery, a veneration for the apostle Paul. I say *apostolic*, because, if any credit is to be given to the earliest ecclesiastical writers, confirmed by internal evidence, afforded by the Gospels themselves, the canonical authority of the four Gospels, *at least*, was settled before the death of St. John, the last surviving apostle; consequently, subsequent to the apostolic age, there could have existed no doubt, with respect to the authenticity of the four Gospels now received by us, nor of the spuriousness of any others that might lay claim to apostolical authority.

No book was received by the church, from its earliest period, as canonical, unless it was known to have been written by an apostle, or by an apostolical man; that is, their companion or fellow-labourer; and the *acknowledged* solicitude of the early Christians, “not to admit any book into the code of the New Testament, of the genuineness of which they had not the clearest evidence<sup>2</sup>,” would no doubt equally operate, to preserve the text of the sacred books pure and uncorrupt.

The apostle John lived to the end of the first century<sup>3</sup>. Justin Martyr embraced Christianity about thirty years afterwards. In his first Apology, addressed to the Emperor and Senate of Rome, he says, that the Gospels, which were written by the apostles and their companions, were read in the public assemblies of the Christians: and that these Gospels contained the narratives of the miraculous conception, is certain, from what Justin says in this same Apology, and in his Dialogue with Trypho. Here is stronger proof than any thing to be met with in the works of Irenæus, that the Gospels to which Justin refers were received as canonical in his time. He has not indeed mentioned the authors of these Gospels by name; but the only point this omission can possibly leave in doubt is, whether the Gospels mentioned by Justin, as received by

---

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to the Improved Version, p. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See Lardner's Supplement to Cred. vol. i. pp. 341, 342.

the church, or, in other words, as canonical, were the same as those which we now receive. His quotations from the Gospels to which he alludes, and his description of the authors, so exactly correspond with the Gospels now received, and with the authors of them, as to place the question beyond dispute with any unprejudiced mind.

Thus we see what little foundation the Editors have for saying, "The innumerable quotations which Justin Martyr makes from the evangelists, without however once mentioning their names, but always citing the *memoirs of the apostles*, is a plain proof that no canon was then authoritatively established." This remark, indeed, by admitting that Justin quoted from our Gospels, removes the only possible difficulty that could be created, by Justin's omission of the names of the evangelists, as it determines that his quotations are from our Gospels; consequently, that they were publicly received by the church, as authentic, in the time of Justin. The futility of the conclusion, thus hastily drawn by the Editors, will also further appear from Tit. i. 12, where St. Paul, speaking of the Cretans, says, "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." This passage, as we learn from other sources, was a verse of the Cretan poet, *Epimenides*; consequently, though the name of the author is not mentioned by the apostle, it is admitted, without hesitation, that he has taken the passage from *Epimenides*.

Whilst, therefore, Justin stamps with the highest authority the Gospels from which he quotes, his omission of the names of the authors, as uninteresting to the persons whom he addressed, cannot authorise the conclusion which the Editors have drawn from it, that it "is a plain proof, that no canon was then authoritatively established." What do the Editors mean by the word *authoritatively*? Origen's Catalogue, A. D. 210, to which they refer, as though it established the canonical authority of the books included in that Catalogue, no more *authoritatively* establishes it, than what Papias, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenæus, or Tertullian, had previously written. If by *authoritatively*, is to be understood the collected sense of the church formally declared, the canon of the New Testament was not, I believe, so established before the Council of Laodicea, A. D. 364. But the Editors say they do not mean this, when they speak of the formation of the canon. If not, the canonical authority of the Gospels quoted by Justin, are as authoritatively established by his description of them, and of their public reception by the church<sup>4</sup>, as they could afterwards be by Origen's mention of them in his Catalogue.

Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius, say that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, were seen and approved by the apostle John; and what

---

<sup>4</sup> Justin's credulity, in too hastily believing reports upon the credit of others, cannot impeach his fidelity as witness of what came under his own observation. His error was that of the age, his fidelity and honesty that of the Christian. See also chap. I.

they say is confirmed by the Gospel of St. John itself, the contents of which indicate, that it was intended as a supplement to the three first Gospels, supplying facts and discourses omitted in them, and omitting some facts and discourses which had been fully related in the other Gospels. The account of the miraculous conception, and of the human descent of Christ from David, being fully given in the other Gospels, the apostle John, instead of a repetition of facts which were already before the public, declares the eternal Deity and incarnation of the Son or Word of God, doctrines intimately connected with the miraculous manner of his conception. Thus the proem to John's Gospel forms an excellent supplement to the introductory chapters of the other Gospels; the *doctrines* of the deity and incarnation of the Word or Son of God, and the *fact* of the miraculous conception, mutually reflecting light on each other.

"St. John," says Dr. Jortin, "had seen the three Gospels, for he wrote his own as a supplement to them, which appears plainly from the harmony of the evangelists. He omits these predictions of Christ, [concerning the destruction of Jerusalem] though he was present at that discourse; of which omission, the most probable reason is, that the other three had mentioned them. Matthew, Mark, and Luke relate, that when the Jews came to seize Christ, a disciple drew his sword, and wounded one of them. John alone names him, and says

that it was Simon Peter: The cause of their silence is obvious; Simon Peter was living when they wrote, and they suppressed his name for several reasons; but when John wrote, Peter was dead. The first three evangelists make no mention of the resurrection of Lazarus; perhaps, lest the Jews, who had consulted to put him to death, should assassinate him. When St. John wrote, it is probable that he was dead, and therefore he gave a particular account of that resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

We may add to the above observations of Dr. Jortin, John's silence, on the restoration of the daughter of Jairus to life, Christ's transfiguration on the Mount, and his agony in the Garden, which omissions cannot rationally be accounted for upon any other supposition, than that of John's knowledge and approbation of the record of these events by the other evangelists. Transactions, of which John, Peter, and James were, of Christ's disciples, the only eye-witnesses, could scarcely otherwise have been omitted by John, when writing memoirs of his Lord and Master.

The apparent difference between Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius, as to the reasons which prompted John to write his Gospel,—the former assigning doctrinal, the latter historical,—does not impeach their testimony, derived from tradition, to the fact, that John had seen and approved of the

---

<sup>5</sup> Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. pp. 51, 52, edit. 1805.

other Gospels before he wrote his own; but rather proves, that Eusebius did not derive his information through Clement only, but from another source; and though I incline to the reason assigned by Clement for John's writing, as corresponding with that given by Irenæus, yet, from a view of the harmony of the Gospels, it will be seen, that John's Gospel really forms a good historical supplement to the other three; so that, if this were not a primary, it might have been a subordinate inducement to John to write his Gospel.

The internal evidence of St. John's Gospel, as stated above, so fully confirms the truth of the tradition, mentioned both by Clement and Eusebius, that John had seen and approved of the other three Gospels before he wrote his own, that it may be considered as establishing the canonical authority of the Gospels before the death of this last surviving apostle of Christ.

Next to Justin Martyr, is Tatian, his disciple or follower, who appears to have been a respectable and valuable member of the Christian church till after the death of Justin, when he imbibed errors similar to those of Valentinus and Marcion, and became the author of the sect of the *Encratites* or *Continents*. After his separation from the church, Tatian composed a harmony of the four Gospels, which he called *Dia Tessaron*. This work is a strong presumptive proof, that four were, and had been, some time before Tatian wrote, the canonical



number of the Gospels; for, had he known, from the period of his conversion to Christianity, which takes us back to the time of Justin, any other Gospel, besides the four, which could at all compete with them in point of authority, it is not to be supposed that Tatian would have waved the advantage which such a Gospel might give to his new opinions. To which we may add, that the very idea of a harmony of the four Gospels, implies that their exclusive authenticity had been long and universally established.

The Editors slightly mention Tatian's *Dia Tesson*, as "the first intimation, that four were the canonical number of the Gospels," and then say, "Irenæus, A. D. 178, assigns some fanciful reasons why the number of the Gospels can be neither more nor less than four. And such appears to have been the influence of this learned father's arguments or authority; that from his time the number of canonical Gospels appears to have been undisputed."<sup>6</sup>

This insinuation of the Editors is not supported by the least evidence. As "the number of canonical Gospels" was settled long before Irenæus wrote, it was not likely that there would be any disputes about their number after his time; but as the language of the Editors implies, that disputes about the number of the Gospels existed,

---

<sup>6</sup> Introduction to the Improved Version, 4th edit. p. vi.

till Irenæus silenced all such disputes by "the influence of his arguments or authority," I call upon them for their proof of such previous disputes.

I may entertain no higher opinion of Irenæus's fanciful reasonings than the Editors themselves; but that does not prevent me from receiving his testimony to matters of fact, as that of an honest and upright man. The testimony of Irenæus to the books of the New Testament is valuable, as it is more specific and extended than that of any previous writer, whilst it agrees with and confirms the preceding testimonies to the authenticity of the books of the New Testament.

The reason why Irenæus is so much more specific than Justin, in his allusions to and quotations from the books of the New Testament, may be discovered in the nature of his work; he was opposing persons who might be called the domestic or covert enemies of Christianity—persons who, to a certain extent, acknowledged the authority of Christ and his apostles, but who corrupted the Christian doctrine. Justin, in those works of his which have descended to us, opposes the open and avowed enemies of Christianity; he conducts his defence of the Christian system accordingly.

Heathen idolatry, or Polytheism, and Judaism, were the two prevailing systems at the advent of Christ. The ruling powers, who embraced the former, are addressed by Justin in his Apology; the prejudices of the Jews are combated by him

in his Dialogue with Trypho. Hence, in neither of these works, could he take that high ground, or assume that tone of authority, when he adverts to the peculiar dogmas of Christianity, as if he were addressing persons who bowed to the name of Jesus, and acknowledged his divine mission. Hence also his frequent recurrence to the *argumentum ad hominem*, because of the difficulty under which he lay, to produce such proofs of the Christian system, as might weigh with opponents, who rejected the authority of the apostolical writings and the divine mission of Christ. His language is consequently sometimes that "of one who wishes to conciliate regard to a novel and offensive opinion, and not of one who advocates the cause of a triumphant majority". For when Justin wrote, the Christians were a despised sect, just emerging from comparative insignificance, their doctrines "novel and offensive" to the reigning superstitions; of which doctrines, the deity, incarnation, and sufferings of Christ, gave peculiar offence both to heathens and Jews.

Under such circumstances, could any thing have been more absurd, than for Justin to "denounce his opponents as heretics," or to "exclude them from Christian communion?" Denunciations at which his heathen and Jewish opponents would only have laughed. Yet, because Justin does not use

---

<sup>7</sup> Belsham's *Calm Inquiry*, 2d edit. p. 260.

<sup>8</sup> Reply to the Bishop of St. David's *Brief Memorial*, p. 133.

language so absurd and preposterous, Mr. Belsham very logically draws the conclusion, that Unitarianism was the prevailing and triumphant doctrine of that age. No; Polytheism and Judaism were the prevalent and triumphant systems—the systems which Justin, in his *Apology and Dialogue*, opposed; and not any particular tenet that was held by one Christian sectary in opposition to another, or to the received doctrines of the church.

In the passage which is so triumphantly produced by Mr. Belsham, in his *Reply to the Bishop of St. David*, pp. 131, 132, from Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, as proof of the prevalence of Unitarianism in the Christian church, Justin is making use of the *argumentum ad hominem*; consequently Mr. Belsham is not warranted, either by the context, or the passage itself, to draw the inference from it, which he has done in the above work, and in his *Calm Inquiry*, in favour of the prevalence of Unitarianism in the church itself, when Justin wrote. When the latter says that there were Gentiles “who acknowledged Jesus to be Christ, but held that he was a man like unto other men,” neither his argument nor context require that these persons should be other than dissentients from the received doctrine of the church; nor would his argument admit of his expressing his disapprobation of their tenets in other terms than those he has adopted. He was not addressing those dissentients, but an unbelieving Jew.

There is a passage in Justin's Apology, which proves that the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ, as the Word, or Logos, who created all things, was not, when he wrote, a novel doctrine in the church, confined to a few speculative men. After accusing Plato of borrowing his notion of the creation of the world, by the Logos and Spirit of God, from Moses, Justin proceeds, "It is not therefore we who take our opinions from others, but others take theirs from us; for you may hear and learn these things from such among us, as are not able to distinguish a letter. Rude indeed, and barbarous in speech, but in mind wise and faithful, and some of them lame and blind; and from hence you may plainly see that Christianity is not owing to human wisdom, but to the power of God."<sup>9</sup>

Here honest Justin is so unconscious of the doctrine of a pre-existent Logos being a novel doctrine among Christians to be brought forward "with virgin bashfulness and timidity," that he appeals to the perfect knowledge which the unlearned and illiterate had of it, as a proof, that the origin of the religion of those, whom the abettors of the reigning superstition called impious, was really divine and from heaven.

This review of the kind of evidence upon which the Unitarian most confidently affirms the Unitarianism of the primitive Christians, may be useful to

<sup>9</sup> Justin's Apology, Reeves's Translation, edit. 1716, pp. 95, 96.

those who do not blindly resign their judgment to the decisions of a party, but are, fearless of taunts and derision, rational and sincere inquirers after truth.

To return to Justin's testimony to the books of the New Testament: I had observed, that the nature of Justin's Apology and Dialogue did not admit of that reference to the books of the New Testament, which is observable in Irenæus. To the same cause is to be attributed the very scanty allusions to the Epistles in those two pieces of Justin's, which have descended to us. From the Apostolicon of Marcion, who was contemporary with Justin, we may conclude that most, if not all the Epistles of St. Paul, were then received as canonical, which shews the absolute nullity of the attempts of the Editors and of Mr. Belsam, to build on the partial silence of an ancient father, when his subject does not lead him to advert to the evangelical or apostolical writings, as evidence of the want of canonical authority of any of the books of the New Testament.

There is a passage in Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, Book III. chap. 37, which confirms the evidence that has been already adduced on the early reception of the four Gospels as canonical: I shall give the passage, as translated by Lardner, with his remarks on it.

"Eusebius," says Lardner, "in the history of the things in the reign of *Trajan*, has this remarkable

passage: ‘ Among those who were illustrious at that time was *Quadratus*, who, together with the daughters of *Philip*, is said to have enjoyed the gift of prophecy. And, besides these, there were at the time many other eminent persons, who had the first rank in the succession of the apostles, who, being the worthy disciples of such men, every where built up the churches, the foundations of which had been laid by the apostles; extending likewise their preaching yet farther, and scattering abroad the salutary seeds of the kingdom of heaven all over the world: for many of the disciples of that time, whose souls the Divine Word had inspired with an ardent love of philosophy, first fulfilled our Saviour’s precept, distributing their substance to the necessitous. Then, travelling abroad, they performed the work of evangelists, being ambitious to preach Christ, and deliver the Scripture of the divine Gospels.’

“ I presume,” adds Lardner, “ I have not improperly placed this passage here. Eusebius, as I just said, is writing the history of things under *Trajan*. In the foregoing chapter he had given an account of *Ignatius* and his writings, who died in the tenth year of *Trajan*; and, in the two following chapters, he speaks of *Clement of Rome* and *Papias*. Though, therefore, Eusebius does not always place things in his *Ecclesiastical History* in the exact order of time, yet I think it must be allowed that he was fully persuaded that, before

the end of the reign of *Trajan*, who died in 117, the Gospels were well known, and collected together; and they who preached the doctrine of Christ to those who had not heard it, carried the Gospels with them, and delivered them to their converts. They must, therefore, have been, before this, for some time in use, and in the highest esteem in the churches planted by the apostles. It must have been no difficult thing, at that time, to know the genuineness of writings, which were of so great authority with them; and certainly they were well assured of it, or they had not so highly esteemed them. The persons, of whom Eusebius here speaks, were the immediate successors of the apostles, and had the first rank among them; and they lived a good part of their time in the very first century, as well as St. Ignatius and St. Clement.

“There can be, I think, but one exception to my placing this passage here, in the reign of *Trajan*, at the year 112; which is, that this is not a passage of any ancient writer of this time, but of Eusebius, an author of the fourth century. To which I would answer, that it is reasonable to suppose *Eusebius* had good ground, from ancient authors, for what he here says: and that the Gospels were before well known, and in great esteem, and collected together, appears probable, from what we ourselves have seen in the apostolical fathers still remaining, particularly *Ignatius*.”<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Lardner's Cred. Part II. Vol. I. Book I. chap. viii.



Lardner's reason for introducing this passage of Eusebius so early in his *Credibility*, is also the reason why I appeal to it as a proof, that the Gospels were known and collected together at the time to which this passage refers, that is, about the year 112. The passages in Ignatius, to which Lardner refers, are his Epistle to the Philadelphians, § v. and ix., to the Smyrnians, § vii.; which passages, with Ignatius's plain allusions to the Gospels of Matthew and John, corroborate the other evidence that has been adduced in favour of the early canonical authority of the four Gospels. There is also a passage in *Papias*, a writer who flourished about the year 116, as given by Eusebius, in which is an authentic testimony to the genuineness of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

What do the Editors oppose to this body of evidence? Nothing but conjectures and hypotheses. But the evidence of the earliest Christian writers is not to be put down by the bold conjectures and hypotheses of writers of the nineteenth century, introduced by a—" *It cannot be doubted*"—" *they would probably*"—" *it is probable*"—" *it is probable, not to say certain*"—" *and it is more than probable.*" We call for evidence, upon which these assertions and probabilities are built; in the absence of which we deprecate all attempts to impose upon us unfounded conjecture for proof, and hypothesis for fact.

And how does Mr. Belsham attempt to con-

travene this evidence? By an appeal to the testimony of Luke. "But when," says he, "the apocryphal Gospels, to which Luke alludes in his preface, were in circulation, and previously to the formation of the canon, it became almost necessary for every person to make the best selection he could from the different copies which were afloat." Mr. Belsham here alludes to Luke's preface to his Gospel; where he says, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them to us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the Word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus." Whatever imperfection might have attended these early attempts to write the history of Christ, nothing false or heretical is charged upon them by Luke. After the appearance of the genuine Gospels, stamped with apostolical authority, these previous imperfect attempts would be superseded by them: that such was the case we may conclude, as, but for what Luke says in his preface, we should not have known that such previous attempts to write the history of Christ had ever been made.

That none but genuine and apostolical writings, which had received the sanction of the primitive church, could command the faith of the early

Christians, may be said to be written, as with a sun-beam, in every passage of ecclesiastical history, from the Acts of the Apostles, downwards. We must therefore have something more than the bare assertion of Mr. Belsham, to convince us that, after the genuine and authentic Gospels appeared, any previous fugitive attempts could at all compete with them, or that the primitive Christians could hesitate which to receive, whether these fugitive attempts, or the genuine Gospels. During the apostolic age, at least, with the exception of those heretics who did not submit to the authority of the apostles, no such competition or hesitation could exist; and this brings us down to the close of the first century; that is, to the establishment of the canonical authority of our four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

What Christian father, of the first two centuries, can Mr. Belsham produce, who makes any allusion to his early apocryphal Gospels? Towards the latter end of the second century, Clement of Alexandria adverts to a *Gospel according to the Egyptians*; but simply adverts to it as apocryphal, and without the least hint of its being an early composition. The title of it, and the first but late allusion to it by an Egyptian father, sufficiently indicate its origin. Mr. Belsham is welcome to make the most he can of this Gospel; to produce his proof, when he has discovered it, of its existence in the apostolic

age, and of its claim to equal authenticity with the canonical Gospels.

The great importance of the subject must be my apology for dwelling so long on it; for if the point which the Editors and Mr. Belsham attempt to establish were conceded to them, the fidelity of the text of our present Gospels, and not of them only, but also of the other books of the New Testament, would be shaken, if not destroyed, and with it our confidence in those records, upon the authenticity of which our faith in Christ is built. I say of the other books of the New Testament, because, if there were any books more secured than the others from interpolation, or fraudulent corruption, through their early circulation and reception, those books were the Gospels.

And what is the object of this mischievous attack upon the fidelity of the text of our four Gospels? No other than to give some plausibility to the Editors' preposterous charge of interpolation against the narratives contained in the first two chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, and to parry the well-founded objection, "that so large and gross an interpolation could not have escaped detection, and would never have been so early and so generally received." This objection retains its full force; for a sufficient space of time did not elapse between the writing of the Gospels, and the general admission of their genuineness and authenticity, to make so large and gross an interpolation possible.

Marcion was contemporary with Justin Martyr, and consequently lived after the establishment of the canonical authority of our four Gospels. It is universally admitted, even by his advocate, Mr. Belsham himself, that Marcion first formed his opinions, which were "the wild speculations of an erroneous philosophy," and then composed a Gospel to coincide with them; consequently, whatever Gospel or Gospels were his prototype, he no further copied them, than as they coincided with, and did not contradict, his pre-conceived opinions. On this subject let us hear Mr. Belsham: "Upon the whole, from the account which is given of Marcion by his adversaries, it seems reasonable to conclude that his opinions were indeed very erroneous; and that, in order to reconcile his crude notion, that Jesus was a celestial spirit, in a human form, sent by the Supreme God, to rescue mankind from the miseries in which they were involved by the Creator of the world, to the doctrine of the Scriptures, he took the liberty of leaving out from his copy of the Gospel, and likewise from some of the epistles of Paul, those passages from which it might be inferred that Jesus was a missionary from the Creator of the world, or the God of the Jews; who, according to Marcion's theory, was hostile to him, and prompted the Jews to put him to death."<sup>11</sup>

Well may Mr. Belsham say, "the liberties which

---

<sup>11</sup> Reply to the Bishop of St. David, pp. 127, 128.

Marcion exercised in forming his eclectic Gospel would not be tolerated in modern times:" nor, we may add, in any times whilst honesty prevails over system-making. Yet it is of this eclectic Gospel of Marcion that the Editors say, "his Gospel was undoubtedly that of Luke's." How a Gospel composed by Marcion can, with any propriety, be denominated the Gospel of Luke, remains for the Editors to explain. That Marcion should maintain the *integrity* of a Gospel, composed by himself, to suit his own erroneous opinions, is not surprising; but that he should maintain its *antiquity*, is only a proof that he wished to impress it with an authority to which it had no claim.

The old heresiarch is however modest, when compared with his modern advocates; he was too conscious of the numerous variations of his Evangelium from any of the four canonical Gospels, to attempt to impose it upon the Christian world as one of them. Not so the Editors of the Improved Version: they know that the advantage their opinions may derive from a spurious Gospel, can only be effected, by making it pass for a more correct copy of one of the four canonical Gospels; and so Marcion's Gospel must, at all events, pass for St. Luke's, weeded from the interpolations contained in our copies, because, forsooth, Marcion "maintains its antiquity, authenticity, and integrity."

“ Upon the whole,” says Mr. Belsham, “ there is no reason to believe that the account of the miraculous conception was found in that copy of Luke’s Gospel which Marcion used.” What Mr. B. means by the expression, “ upon the whole,” I do not know : nothing that he has before said proves that Marcion made use of any copy of Luke’s Gospel. If he did form his *Evangelium* from it, his omission of the narrative of the miraculous conception, in his eclectic Gospel, would be no proof that the text of the copy of Luke’s Gospel in his possession did not correspond with ours, as such omission may be accounted for, by the narrative being inconsistent with his sentiments, that Christ was not born into this world, nor passed through infancy and youth to manhood; “ that he appeared in the form of a man,” to adopt the words of Mr. Belsham, “ but was not really such; and that he did not visit the world till the commencement of his public ministry, in the fifteenth year of Tiberius.”<sup>12</sup>

From the general circulation of the Gospels in the time of Marcion, and from a passage in Tertullian, (*Adv. Marc. lib. iv. c. 3*), by which it seems that he endeavoured to weaken the credit of the canonical Gospels, it is probable, that he had not only seen the Gospel of Luke, but the others also. If, under these circumstances, we had reason

---

<sup>12</sup> Reply to the Bishop of St. David, p. 126.

to conclude that he was ignorant of the narrative of the miraculous conception, it would be a strong presumptive evidence, that his copy of Luke's Gospel had not this narrative; but, unfortunately for the argument of Mr. Belsham, the fact is, that Marcion was acquainted with this narrative; consequently, so far as the evidence before us extends, it is in favour of the existence of the narrative of the miraculous conception, in Marcion's copy of Luke's Gospel. But the Editors say, that it was "treated by him with the most contemptuous ridicule," (Introd. p. vii.) This may have some influence on such writers as the Editors; but with those who have respect for apostolical doctrine and apostolical authority, the opposition to any portion of the evangelical histories, by such an avowed enemy to the genuine Gospels, and to the apostolical faith, as Marcion, can have little other effect, than to recommend, as being more probably genuine, such portion of Scripture.

Mr. Belsham admits, that Marcion was as much the author of the Evangelium, received by himself and his followers, as St. Luke was the author of the Gospel which goes by his name; yet, in a Note on the passage he has quoted from Tertullian, Mr. Belsham says, "It is plain that Marcion maintains, not that his was a genuine copy of Luke, but a genuine Evangelium. Tertullian indeed pretends, that his own copy was more ancient, and therefore more pure; but for this we have only Tertullian's



word. And Marcion, who lived so much nearer the time of the apostles, must have been a better judge."<sup>12</sup>

It is really trifling to make it a subject of serious inquiry, whether a Gospel composed by Marcion was more ancient, than a Gospel written by St. Luke, about seventy years before. We know that the copy of Luke's Gospel, received by Tertullian, and which he maintains to be more ancient than Marcion's Evangelium, was the same that was received by the church in his time; and that its canonical authority was established before Marcion wrote. It is therefore worse than trifling, to say "we have only Tertullian's word" for its purity and antiquity.

From whatever materials Marcion formed his Evangelium, his mutilated Gospel (for such Mr. Belsham confesses it to be) can never justly claim the appellation of "*a genuine Evangelium*;" and Marcion's attempt to make it pass for such, whilst he rejected the genuine Gospels, only convicts him as guilty of a base imposture on the world: yet the word of this impostor, Marcion, this notorious corrupter of the apostolical doctrine, is to be believed before that of honest Tertullian, and the whole Christian church.

When Mr. Belsham says, that Marcion formed his Gospel "exactly upon the principle upon

---

<sup>12</sup> Appendix, &c. p. 123.

which Luke professes to have formed his own," he says what is not true. There is not one point of similitude between Marcion and Luke. The latter wrote what he had received from "eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word," with simplicity and sincerity, uninfluenced by any sectarian or party principle. The former, having imbibed opinions that were anti-christian, rejected the genuine Gospels, because they were unfavourable to his notions, fabricated a Gospel to supersede them, and pretended that it was an original and authentic Gospel.

The reader will probably have discovered some inconsistency in the preceding extracts from Mr. Belsham, on Marcion's Evangelium: yet, on one point, they speak the same language; they uniformly represent Marcion's Evangelium as a work quite distinct from the Gospel of Luke. This point Mr. B. labours to establish, in order to rebut the charge against Marcion, of being "a voluntary falsifier and corrupter of Luke's text:" so that, if he had taken up the pen for the very purpose, he could not more effectually have opposed the attempts of the Editors of the Improved Version, to identify Marcion's Gospel with that of Luke. But the following passage, taken from the same work of Mr. B.'s as the foregoing extracts, will prove, that there is no absurdity, no self-contradiction, to which the critics of the Unitarian school are not equal, to suit the spur of the occasion.

“ Since Dr. Priestley,” says Mr. Belsham, “ and others after him, have appealed to Marcion’s copy of the Gospel of Luke, as an authority for the omission of the account of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, it is astonishing to observe with what incredible pains learned men have collected together, or perhaps copied from each other, the virulent abuse which the ancient orthodox writers have heaped upon that famous heretic, for corrupting, as they call it, the genuine Scriptures; that is, in other words, for using a different, and in some respects, as impartial and well-informed critics acknowledge, a more correct copy than themselves.”<sup>14</sup>

That is, Marcion’s Gospel, which was formed upon the same principle as Luke formed his,— Marcion’s eclectic Gospel, which was so corrupt, that it would not “ be tolerated in modern times,” is, after all, only a copy of St. Luke’s Gospel, and, in some respects, a more correct copy than any now existing, as impartial and well-informed critics acknowledge.” These impartial and well-informed critics are no other than Michaelis, and his editor, Dr. Marsh, now Bishop of Peterborough. The passages to which Mr. Belsham refers, in support of his appeal to the authority of these critics, are in Michaelis’s Introduction, by Marsh, Vol. III. Part I. p. 271, and Part II. p. 159. The first

---

<sup>14</sup> Reply to the Bishop of St. David, p. 117.

of these references is to the text of Michaelis, the second to Dr. Marsh's Note on the same. I shall give both the text and Note.

"St. Luke's Gospel alone," says Michaelis, "was admitted by Marcion, who made however many alterations in it, so as to render it more suitable to his own system. But not all the alterations in Marcion's copy are to be considered as wilful corruptions; for several of them are nothing more than what modern critics call various readings." On this passage, Dr. Marsh observes, "It has been very generally believed, on the authority of Tertullian and Epiphanius, that Marcion wilfully corrupted the Gospel of St. Luke. Now it is true that the long catalogue of Marcion's quotations, which Epiphanius has preserved in his forty-second Heresy, exhibits readings, which materially differ from those of the corresponding passages in St. Luke's Gospel; consequently, *if* Marcion really derived those quotations from a copy of St. Luke's Gospel, that copy must have contained a text, which in many places materially differed from our genuine text, though the question will still remain undecided, whether the alterations were made by Marcion himself, or whether he used a manuscript in which they had been already made. But that Marcion used St. Luke's Gospel at all, is a position which has been taken for granted, without the least proof. Marcion himself never pretended

that it was the Gospel of St. Luke, as Tertullian acknowledges, saying, ‘*Marcion Evangelio suo nullum ascribit autorem.*’ Adv. Marcion, lib. iv. cap. 2. It is probable therefore, that he used some apocryphal Gospel, which had much matter in common with that of St. Luke, but yet was not the same. On this subject, see Griesbach *Historia Textus Epistolarum Paulinarum*, pp. 91, 92, and Loeffler’s dissertation, entitled, ‘*Marcionem Paulli Epistolas et Lucæ Evangelium adulterasse dubitatur,*’ which is printed in the first volume of the *Commentationes Theologicæ*.”

These two passages are given at length, without the omission of a single word, or I might not command belief, that Mr. Belsham would have attempted to impose so grossly upon his reader; it would not have been credited that Mr. B.’s “impartial and well-informed critics” express themselves in language directly opposite to that for which Mr. B. appeals to them. In the first passage, Michaelis accuses Marcion of wilfully corrupting Luke, though all his variations were not of that character. In the second passage, Dr. Marsh, from the great and numerous variations between the text of Marcion and that of Luke, concludes, that it is probable that Marcion did not use the Gospel of Luke at all: the reader has the passages now before him,—a favour which, he may be assured, was not intended for him by

Mr. Belsham,—and what is the result? The names of Michaelis, Dr. Marsh, Griesbach, and Loeffler, are united against the opinion, that Marcion's Evangelium was a genuine copy of Luke's Gospel.

Having restored Marcion's Evangelium to its original apocryphal value, we will turn from Mr. Belsham, and his contradictory attempts to prop up its authority, to the Editors of the Improved Version. In their fourth edition, they have inserted the following additional paragraph in their Note on Luke i. 4.

“ It has however been alleged, that the narrative of Luke does not necessarily imply the miraculous conception, and consequently, that the prefatory chapters of this Gospel may stand, though those in Matthew were given up. And much ingenuity has been displayed in explaining Luke i. 26—38, consistently with this hypothesis. To which it seems sufficient to reply, that the words have hitherto been universally understood, as plainly asserting the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, and that no other interpretation was heard of for seventeen hundred years. A sense so novel, therefore, is not likely to be the true meaning of the passage. At any rate, the chronological difficulty remains the same; and the fabulous circumstances, such as a host of angels singing in the air, &c. &c., give a cast of improbability to the whole

narrative. See Dr. Carpenter's Unitarianism the Doctrine of the Gospel, edit. 2, p. 353."

Mark the argument of Dr. Carpenter; 1st, *The premise*, "that the narrative of Luke *does not* necessarily imply the miraculous conception. 2d, *The deduction; consequently*, that the prefatory chapters to this Gospel *may stand*." Could language more explicitly declare, that if the introductory chapters to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke would admit of an interpretation that did not imply a miraculous conception, the other objections, urged by the Unitarians against the authenticity of these chapters, would sink into comparative insignificance?

Unfortunately for the above-mentioned hypothesis, the objections which the Editors adduce against the first two chapters of Matthew, will, most of them, equally apply to the first two chapters of Luke. The Editors feel this difficulty, which would press upon them, if they adopted Dr. Carpenter's hypothesis; they therefore reject it, and, with more consistency than reason, persist in expunging from the Sacred Records those chapters, which record a fact that is obnoxious to them.

The Editors have, in their Notes, shewn sufficient inclination to throw discredit upon the existence of angels, as super-human and heavenly beings. Upon their interpretation of those passages of Scripture, which have been usually considered

as implying the existence of such beings, I shall not, in this place, make any animadversion; but for them to make a *mere hypothetical opinion* of their own, a *sufficient datum* upon which to pronounce a passage or passages of Scripture *fabulous*, is to sacrifice, to their own dogmas and prejudices, every principle of sound criticism.



## APPENDIX, No. III.

---

*The Editors substitute, in the Fourth Edition of the Improved Version, Wakefield's Translation of Luke ii. 2, for Newcome's Version, adopted by them in their First Edition—Animadversions on this Variation, and on the Editors' accompanying Note—on their Arraignment of Lardner's Motives—his Translation the most consistent with the Context—Animadversions on the Liberties which the Editors take with the Greek Original, in their rendering of John i. 10, Heb. i. 5, 8, and 1 Cor. i. 2—Strictures on a Vindication of the Editors' rendering of 1 Cor. i. 2, by a Writer in the Monthly Repository, and on the Editors' New Version of Rom. x. 13.*

**I**N the first edition of the Improved Version, the Editors adopt Newcome's Version of Luke ii. 2, "This was the first enrolment of Cyrenius, afterwards Governor of Syria." In the fourth edition this version is rejected, and the following substituted—"Now this first registering was when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria;" and the following Note annexed, "Which he never was in the time of Herod, and consequently the whole story is a fabrication. Archbishop Newcome, to avoid

this consequence, adopts Lardner's version of the text: 'This was the first enrolment of Cyrenius, *afterwards* Governor of Syria.' (Lard. Cred. ii. 723), a version which would never have been thought of, had it not been to save a hypothesis. That in the text is Mr. Wakefield's. Bishop Chandler and Mr. Boyer thought the sentence an interpolation. See Newcome's Note."

This note sufficiently explains the motive which induced the Editors to raise again a difficulty, which they had laid by their *Improved Version*, in their first edition; but they have carefully concealed from the readers of their fourth edition, this retrograde movement.

What new critical or theological light has beamed on this text, since the Editors first published their *Improved Version*? Whence have they since discovered that Lardner gave his version of the original to save a hypothesis? What is the hypothesis he attempted to save?

The simple fact appears to be this; the Editors have discovered, since they first published the *Improved Version*, that their improved version of the passage before us, obviated an historical difficulty which they do not desire to see removed, as it occurs in a part of the Gospel of St. Luke, which they have rejected as a heathen fable; therefore, "to save a hypothesis," they have endeavoured to recover this false step, by an unacknowledged alteration of their version, and

by impeaching the motives which induced Lardner to adopt a version that removed the difficulty.

Never was there less foundation for an accusation, than for this of the Editors against Lardner. He has shewn no more predilection for the first two chapters of Luke, than for any other portion of the evangelical histories; the difficulties,\*whether chronological or otherwise, which present themselves in this part of St. Luke's Gospel, he fairly meets, and has proved them to be no other than those which almost unavoidably attend the histories of events of so remote a date.

When "the words of the original have in them an uncommon ambiguity," to adopt Lardner's language on the passage before us; that version of them should be adopted, which is most consistent with the context. This is what Lardner has attempted in his version of Luke ii. 2; and the Editors were bound, by every principle of sound criticism, to prove that the original did not admit of Lardner's version of it, before they expunged it from their page; and, upon its substitute, drew the flippant conclusion, that "the whole story is a fabrication."

The same acquaintance with his subject, and the same discrimination which is displayed in other parts of the writings of St. Luke, is evinced in the account of the enrolment at the birth of Jesus. His description of this census or enrolment, shews that it could not be the census made by Cyrenius,

upon the banishment of Archelaus, when Judea was added to the province of Syria. Luke says, that there went out a decree from Augustus, that all the land should be enrolled. And Joseph also went up from Galilee. Πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην, which our translators have rendered *all the world*, is in Isaiah xiii. 5, rendered *all the land*. And in Acts xi. 28, the context requires the same construction. That by *all the land*, in Luke ii. 1, all the land of Israel is to be understood, is evident from the extension of the enrolment to Galilee, and from the whole of the land of Israel being then under one jurisdiction: Herod the Great having been made, by the Romans, king of the whole land, so that no tax or enrolment could be imposed on Judea, properly so called, without extending to the rest of the land of Israel; whereas, at the second census or enrolment, upon the deposition and banishment of Archelaus, Judea was dismembered from Galilee, the former being made part of a province of the Roman empire, whilst the latter was under the jurisdiction of Herod the Tetrarch. See Luke xxiii. 6; 7.

Thus it appears, that whether the Greek phrase in Luke ii. 1, be translated *all the land*, or *all the world*, it could not apply to the second census by Cyrenius, after the deposition of Archelaus, as this was neither a census of the whole Roman empire, nor of the whole land of Israel, but a partial census, made in consequence of the junction of Judea, properly so called, with the province of Syria.

“ St. Luke’s words, therefore,” to borrow the language of Lardner, “ are extremely proper and expressive, that all the land should be taxed, [or enrolled] to shew that this decree of Augustus comprehended Galilee, the country in which Joseph lived. That this was the intention, in adding this term of universality, is evident from St. Luke’s specifying immediately afterwards the name of the city from which Joseph came to Bethlehem, which city was not in the country that originally belonged to the tribe of Judah, nor situated in the bounds of the province of Judea, at the time in which St. Luke is supposed to write, but was of the kingdom of Judea, in the reign of Herod.”

St. Luke’s description of this enrolment is consistent with the nature of a Roman census: he says, that Joseph went to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife. It was the custom of the Romans to enrol women as well as men, whereas the Jews numbered or enrolled males only. The words of St. Luke, as translated by Lardner, “ This was the first enrolment of Cyrenius, Governor of Syria,” not only distinguish this census, under Herod, from a census afterwards made, but from a census afterwards made by the same Cyrenius; and this latter census must have been that which was occasioned by Judea being annexed to the province of Syria. Luke has therefore made no mistake; he has not placed the second of these enrolments in the reign

of Herod the Great, but he distinguishes this second enrolment, or census, from that at the birth of Christ. It is true that, from Luke only, we learn that Cyrenius was employed in the first census. It is also equally true that, from Josephus and Luke only, we learn any thing of the second census by Cyrenius. But then there is nothing in the accounts transmitted to us by the Roman historians, of the official engagements of Cyrenius, which renders it improbable that he was employed to make both these enrolments.

So much in proof of the consistency of Dr. Lardner's version of this difficult passage with the context and with history. But if it be urged that the authorised translation is a more natural construction of the Greek than that proposed by Lardner; I have already shewn, p. 185, how this parenthetical passage, thus translated, is explained by some commentators, that although the enrolment was made at the time of the birth of Christ, the tax, which was consequent upon it, was *first* levied when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria. This construction of the passage is adopted by Dr. Lant Carpenter, who says, "The second verse may be rendered literally, 'The enrolment itself (or this enrolment) was made (or carried into effect) when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria;' and so far from presenting any chronological difficulty, I regard it as indicating that accuracy of detail which distinguishes the writings of St. Luke. He informs

us, that the decree of Augustus set all Palestine in motion; but he also gives us to understand, that the enrolment was not actually executed till a certain definite period, which he specifies. In other words, that, from some cause or other, which it did not fall within his province to explain, the complete execution of the decree was suspended.”<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Monthly Repository for June 1822, Vol. XVII. p. 348. I agree with Dr. Carpenter, that “the decree must have been caused by some severe displeasure on the part of Augustus, against the Jewish sovereign.” And it is an indisputable fact, that about the time when Jesus was born, Herod lay under the displeasure of Augustus, who threatened him that, “whereas of old he had used him as his friend, he should now use him as a subject.” Jos. Antiq. Book XVI. c. ix. § 3. It is also equally indisputable, that about this very period, “the whole Jewish nation took an oath to be faithful to Cæsar, and the interests of the King.” These facts, which corroborate the history of Luke, accord also with the chronology of the birth of Christ, adopted in this work; but they do not accord with the chronology *recently* adopted by Dr. C.: he therefore necessarily affixes a later date for Luke’s enrolment, and supposes that it took place pending Archelaus’s application to Augustus, for the confirmation of his father’s will, which gave him the kingdom of Judea. Several and insuperable objections lie against this date of the enrolment: 1st, Archelaus had not offended Augustus, but was treated by him with kindness;—2d, Augustus finally determined in favour of Archelaus;—3d, Josephus is silent, with respect to any census, or oath of fidelity, being taken by the Jews, during this period;—4th, it is highly improbable, not to say incongruous, that Augustus would issue an edict, which, in effect, made Judea a province of the Roman empire, before he had decided on the claims of Archelaus to that kingdom, in virtue of the will of Herod.

Thus, in whatever point of view the subject presents itself to our consideration, history, so far as it is connected with the evangelical narratives, not only confirms them, and that in a way the most satisfactory, because it is incidental; but also confirms that chronology of the events recorded, which supposes Luke’s fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, chap. iii. 1, to be computed from his joint government with Augustus. That Luke has thus computed, is also rendered probable,

This statement of Dr. C.'s does not entirely remove every difficulty attending this obscure parenthetical passage in Luke. I may confess my suspicion, that this obscurity is occasioned by some inaccuracy in the text. The writer evidently designs to distinguish between two different periods of enrolment, or taxing: that made by Cyrenius, when he was Governor of Syria, is the last on record, as being made in Judea. The passage must therefore allude to one previously made at the birth of Jesus; and this indeed the context and chronology of the events recorded require. Yet, as the passage is now expressed (if we reject Lardner's version), it does not, with sufficient clearness, distinguish the first enrolment, from that made at the deposition of Archelaus. But if the difficulty attending this passage is not entirely obviated, it is proved to be innoxious. Neither the veracity of the evangelist, nor the accuracy of his narrative, is implicated by it.

I cannot conclude the subject of this Appendix, without observing upon the objection that Lardner has adopted his version of Luke ii. 2, to support a hypothesis, that it comes "with a peculiarly good grace" from the Editors of the Improved Version,

---

by his use of the word, which is translated *reign*; he neither uses τῆς Βασιλείας, nor τῆς ἀρχῆς, but τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου, a word more appropriate to a subordinate authority, than either of the two former words.—See *Benson's Chronology of our Saviour's Life*, &c. p. 210.



who arbitrarily supply, in their version of John i. 10, *πεφωτισμένοι*, *enlightened*, after *ἐγένετο*; who, in Heb. i. 5, substitute in the text, *adopted thee*, for *begotten thee*, though in the margin they acknowledge that the latter is the true rendering of the Greek; who translate Heb. i. 8, 'Ὁ θρόνος σου, Ὁ Θεός, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος' *God is thy throne for ever and ever*; who translate 1 Cor. i. 2, "To all that in every place are called by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," instead of "call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

A learned writer has, in the *Monthly Repository* for May 1809, exercised considerable ingenuity to justify the new version of 1 Cor. i. 2, adopted by the Editors. He says, "The original words, taken unconnectedly, admit of four renderings. 1. *Actively*, 'to all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'—2. Also *actively*, 'to all who appeal to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'—3. *Passively*, 'to all who are called by [or according to] the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'—4. With the *middle* force, 'to all who call upon themselves [or take upon themselves] the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.' The cause of the ambiguity is, that the present tense of the verb in question, may be either middle or passive:—if *middle*, it requires the 1st, or 2d, or 4th rendering; if passive, it requires the 3d rendering.

"In favour of the *first*, it is to be observed, that the verb in this doubtful form, is generally used in

the Greek translation of the Old Testament in this sense; and perhaps always so in this connexion, (with 'the name of the Lord' after it); and that in the New Testament, it is several times used in this sense; viz. Acts vii. 59, Rom. x. 12, 2 Cor. i. 23, 2 Tim. ii. 22, 1 Pet. i. 17." To these instances should be added, according to this writer's own admission, Acts ii. 21, (and probably) xxii. 16, and Rom. x. 13, 14. And to these may also be added Acts ix. 14, 21.

"The *second* is an unusual rendering; but it is," says this writer, "somewhat authorised by Acts xxv. 11, where Luke records the words of Paul, 'I appeal to Cæsar:' and it should be observed, that Luke and Paul only use the phrase in question.

"In favour of the *third* rendering, it may be urged, that the verb in this doubtful form is used seven times in the writings of Luke with the passive force; viz. (Luke xxii. 3, Acts x. 5, 18, 32, xi. 13, xii. 12, xv. 22;) and once in the Epistle to the Hebrews, xi. 16; and that, with the exception of Acts ii. 21, vii. 59, (and probably) xxii. 16, Luke always uses the verb in this sense, or in the second."

In the seven instances here adduced, the verb in question is used in a connexion very different from Acts ii. 21, or 1 Cor. i. 2, &c. These instances therefore determine nothing as to the sense of the verb, when Luke uses it in the same connexion as in the Septuagint.

“ In favour of the *fourth*,” continues this writer, “ it may be said, that the language admits of it; but we are not aware that there is any scriptural evidence for it, except Gen. iv. 26, where, instead of ‘ then began men to call upon the name of the Lord,’ the sense seems to require the marginal reading of the English version, viz. ‘ to call themselves by the name of the Lord.’ ”

“ On the whole, then, the evidence arising from the scriptural use of the *verb*, rests principally with the 1st and 3d renderings; and as far as the customary use merely of precisely this *phrase* is concerned, the evidence decidedly favours the first.”

So far this writer; and if such be the evidence, why must we leave the usual sense of the phrase in question, in the Septuagint, in which sense this writer acknowledges that it is used both by Luke and Paul, and affix to it a sense, which, so far as relates to this precise phrase, is not authorised, either by the Septuagint or the New Testament? The candour, however, of this writer, gives us a key to solve this question.

“ When we come, however,” says he, “ to the point of *fact*, the state of the case becomes different. If the first rendering be preferred, in consequence of the *use* of the phrase in the Septuagint, then must also the *meaning* of the phrase in the Septuagint be employed; and it must be maintained, that Luke and Paul speak of the Christians, as those who call

upon our Lord Jesus Christ as the object of religious worship. Now, unless the phrase itself (which all must admit to be fully capable of a different meaning) prove the point, we have no ground to believe that the first Christians did so. Several instances occur, in which the disciple had sensible intercourse with his exalted Lord; others, in which praise and glory are ascribed to him:—but not one in which any supplication is made to Jesus, when not actually present; in other words, there is no instance in which prayer was offered to Jesus. No Jew would do this, without an express command; the command (as well as example) of our Lord is directly contrary to it, (see Matt. vi. 6, 9, John xvi. 23, xvii.); and the New Testament history affords no fact to countenance the idea, that the first Christians did not follow their Lord's precepts in this respect. Hence, therefore, the first rendering (in the common meaning of it, at least), though justified by the phraseology of the Septuagint, is not accordant with the matter of fact, and is therefore inadmissible, if there be any other justifiable rendering, which is accordant with the matter of fact."<sup>2</sup>

Two reasons are assigned for departing from the common rendering. 1st, That the verb *ἐπικαλέομαι* is used in the writings of Luke, in the passive force. 2d, That the common rendering "is not accordant

---

<sup>2</sup> Monthly Repository, Vol. IV. pp. 266, 267.

with the matter of fact." In answer to the first reason, I have already observed, that when the verb is used by Luke with the passive force, it is used in a very different connexion: it is also to be observed, that this writer himself cannot deny, that in more than one instance at least, when Luke has used the verb in the same connexion as it is in 1 Cor. i. 2, he has used it with the active force.

The departure of the Editors from the common rendering in Acts ix. 14 and 21, notwithstanding the ingenious attempts to support it, is neither justified by the context, nor by the matter of fact. The expression in Acts ix. 2, "if he found any of this way, he might bring them bound," &c., presents a pretty strong presumptive proof, that the disciples had not then any specific designation, and therefore could not with propriety be described as called by the name of Christ; for if they had, we should in this passage probably have met with it, rather than with a circuitous mode of expression. And it is an acknowledged fact, that the disciples were not called Christians till some time after this period. See Acts xi. 26. It is also to be considered, that the passage under consideration, is in the writings of St. Paul, and not in those of St. Luke. The sense of the passage ought rather to be determined by St. Paul's, than by St. Luke's, use of the same phrase in other parts of his writings. St. Paul uses this phrase six times; and the above critic, in the Monthly

Repository, admits that, with the single exception of the passage before us, Paul uses the phrase in the same sense as Acts ii. 21. Such being the fact, a very strong case should be made out to justify a deviation, in this instance, from the sense in which the apostle usually applies the verb in question. Is such a case made out? No; unless it is to be discovered in the objection, that if the apostle's usual rendering of the verb be adopted, it will make him, in this instance, "speak of the Christians, as those who call upon our Lord Jesus Christ as the object of religious worship," which, says he, "is not accordant with the matter of fact." This (which forms the second reason for rejecting the common rendering of 1 Cor. i. 2), I deny. In Acts vii. 59, 60, prayer is addressed to Christ, by Stephen, in the most unequivocal terms. The language is similar to that which, under similar circumstances, Christ addressed to his Father, Luke xxiii. 46. If the latter be admitted to be a prayer, the former must be equally so. All prayer supposes the object to which it is addressed to be present; it also supposes the worshipper to be conscious of such presence. The very idea of a prayer addressed to an object not within hearing, is an absurdity; neither does the narrative support the Unitarian hypothesis, absurd as it is. Stephen saw the glory of God and of Christ, when he was before the council in the city, Acts vii. 55, 56; but he prayed to Christ when they were stoning

him without the gate of the city, just before he expired, Ibid. ver. 59, 60; and the text says nothing of Jesus being then visible to Stephen. The only point we have therefore to consider is, whether the words used by Stephen constituted a prayer, or a mere request or favour which one finite being might ask of another? On this point there can scarcely be a difference of opinion. The Unitarian is too conscious that the prayer of Stephen to Christ is exactly the same as the prayer of Christ to his Father, to attempt to controvert it; but he takes refuge in the strange hypothesis, that the same petition is or is not a prayer, as the person to whom it is addressed is supposed to be *sensibly* present or not.

“A wish,” says Mr. Belsham, “is merely the expression of desire. Prayer is that expression addressed to one who is supposed to be present, and able to accomplish it. And if this person, though not sensibly, is believed to be really present, prayer is an act of religious worship.” Of the invocation of Christ by Stephen, this same writer observes, “that this holy proto-martyr had just been favoured with an actual vision of our Lord; and that the vivid impression of it, if not the vision itself, must have continued on his mind, so that he had a certain knowledge, if not a visible perception, of the real presence of Christ. The example of this primitive martyr, therefore, does not fall within the limit of religious worship, nor in

the least degree authorise addresses to Christ, when he is not sensibly present.”<sup>3</sup>

If the inspired writers of the New Testament had any idea of this refined distinction between the *sensible* and *invisible* presence of the object of prayer, they would carefully have noted the distinction, when they recorded addresses to God and to Christ, to distinguish the former from the latter, and prevent the dangerous error which their words otherwise countenance; but it is evident, from their record of these addresses or prayers, that they made no such distinction, that it did not once occur to them. See Acts vii. 59, 60; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9; 1 Thess. iii. 11, 12.—No; it is a distinction of Unitarian origin, “to save a hypothesis.”

The fact recorded, Acts vii. 59, 60, controverts, of itself, the position of the writer in the Monthly Repository; but we may add to it Acts i. 24, 25, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9, and 1 Thess. iii. 11, 12, in proof that “*the matter of fact*” supports the common rendering of 1 Cor. i. 2. Thus also, “if Saul knew no more of the Christians, at the time of his conversion, than we may infer from the preceding chapters of the Acts,” the example of Stephen would of itself have authorised him to consider “the Christians as persons who prayed to Christ;” and they might be distinguished by an allusion to this peculiar trait in their character, before they received the specific designation of *Christians*.

---

<sup>3</sup> Calm Inquiry, 2d edit. pp. 239, 240.



Consistent with the fact and with this natural inference from the fact, is the common rendering of Acts ix. 14, 21.

In the Gospels, I see no command of Christ prohibiting prayer to him; whatever may be the true import of John xvi. 23, the matter of fact, as admitted by all parties, proves that it does not apply to the question before us.

The Editors of the Improved Version, in their first edition, translated Acts ii. 21, and Rom. x. 13, consistently with the sense of the Septuagint, in Joel ii. 32. In their fourth edition, they have rendered Rom. x. 13, "Whosoever taketh upon himself the name of the Lord, shall be saved;" and though in Acts they retain the rendering of their first edition, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered;" in a Note, they give a different construction of it, that may support their new version of Rom. x. 13. The Editors must have been influenced by some other than critical reasons, when they gave a version of these two passages, different from that in Joel, whence they are taken. To make Rom. x. 12 coincide with their new version of the 13th verse, they have substituted, "who call themselves by his name," for "who call upon him." To make this new version at all admissible, the Greek should be *τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ*, instead of *τοὺς ἐπικαλουμένους αὐτόν*. The same liberty is taken with the 14th verse, to make it correspond with those that precede.

What reason can be assigned for such inconsistent and arbitrary versions of passages in the New Testament, whenever they have any bearing, however remote, upon the Trinitarian question, but a determination to make the text of Scripture conformable to “a systematic theology, which has no foundation in the Scriptures themselves?” Yet these are the critics who accuse Lardner and Newcome of adopting a version of Luke ii. 2, “which,” they say, “would never have been thought of, had it not been to save a hypothesis.”

## APPENDIX, No. IV.

---

*The Editors make Chronology conformable to their Purpose—Instances adduced, particularly their new Note on Acts ii. 22.—Animadversions on this Note—Strictures on the Inconsistency of the Objections made to the Narratives of the Miraculous Conception, by Dr. Priestley and Mr. Pope—Observations on some characteristic Traits which distinguish the Sacred Writings from every merely Human Composition.*

WHEN there is any difficulty in settling the chronology of a part of the sacred narrative, which the Unitarian wishes to expunge from the canon of Scripture, (and what ancient history is there unattended with such difficulties?) we have seen that he does not fail to magnify such difficulty into a real discrepancy; and if he finds it no easy task to disprove the solution of the difficulty, which may have been proposed by the learned, he substitutes ridicule for argument, and informs us, in a facetious but triumphant strain, that he knows "how expert theologians and keen disputants wince and struggle, in order to disentangle themselves from this chronological dilemma. But dates, as Horace Walpole observes, are a sort of obstinate things; and astronomical phenomena do not easily recede to

accommodate a polemic in distress.”<sup>1</sup> But when chronology or history presents a formidable opposition to his argument, he can, with surprising agility, turn his tactics; and the text itself, which in the former case he could not suppose liable to the least verbal inaccuracy, must bend to his decisions; and he will extricate himself from his “chronological dilemma,” by obliterating those words which create it, and substituting others in their place, attributing the blunder, not to the author, but to some early transcriber.

This new mode of criticism was too accommodating for the Editors of the Improved Version not to avail themselves of. We have an example of the first mode of criticism in the Editors’ Notes on Matt. i. 16, and Luke i. 4. (See Chap. V. of this Work.) Of the latter, in their Notes on Matt. i. 1, and iii. 1; and in the defence of those Notes by their advocate, *A Calm Inquirer*, in the Monthly Repository. (See Chap. III. of this Work.)

In their display of a magnanimous contempt for the difficulties which chronology presents to their decisions, the Editors “have excelled all their former excellings,” in a Note on Luke ii. 22, in the fourth edition of the Improved Version, not inserted in the first. “The time fixed by law,” say they, “for this ceremony, was thirty-three days

---

<sup>1</sup> Belsham’s Letters on Arianism, p. 70.

after the birth. See Lev. xii. 4. They brought him to Jerusalem; therefore they were not afraid of Herod. They returned, ver. 39, to Nazareth, not to Bethlehem, consequently, the wise men from the East did not visit Jesus at Bethlehem. They returned to Nazareth, because it was their *own city*; and not, as the pretended Matthew says, because they were warned in a dream, and to fulfil a prophecy which does not exist: Matt. ii. 23. Finally, they went up every year to Jerusalem at the Passover, ver. 41; therefore they did not go down into Egypt. Hence it follows, that both the accounts cannot be true: and in fact neither of them is worthy of credit."

I refer the reader to Chap. V. of this Work, for a chronological statement of the events adverted to in this Note, and proceed to point out some of its blunders. Christ was born, according to Lardner's calculation, about one year and six or seven months before the death of Herod, September or October, A. U. 748 or 749. In the early part of the following year, that is, about five or six months after the birth of Christ, the wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, and made inquiry after him who was born King of the Jews. It would indeed have been passing strange, if the parents of Jesus had been prevented from presenting him, agreeably to the law, at the temple, forty days after his birth (not thirty-three days, as the Editors erroneously assert), for fear

of the design of Herod on the life of the child, excited by the inquiries of the wise men, several months after his birth; that is, for them to be afraid of the effects of Herod's jealousy months before it existed.

It appears (as I have before observed), from Luke's account, that after the parents of Jesus had performed what was required by the law, they immediately returned to Nazareth. This return, mentioned by Luke, must have been full a year before the return from Egypt, mentioned by Matthew. Neither does Luke assign any reason for their return to Nazareth, as might be inferred from the Editors' Note; but he simply and nakedly states the fact. When the parents of Jesus returned from Egypt, there might be sufficient reason for their hesitation as to the place most proper for their future residence; they might not know whether their flight to Egypt, after the visit of the wise men to them, had not been made known at Jerusalem. Their doubts were removed by divine instruction.

The Editors observe that, according to Luke, "the wise men from the East did not visit Jesus at Bethlehem." In reply, it might suffice to observe, that Matthew does not say they did; but I have shewn, p. 160, that Luke's narrative presents no obstacle to the visit being at Bethlehem. Nothing can be more captious than the conclusion which the Editors draw from Luke's saying that the parents

of Jesus went every year to Jerusalem at the Pass-over, that therefore they could not go into Egypt : this journey was not likely, at the most, to break in upon their customary annual visit to Jerusalem, more than once. Luke's words inform us what was the custom of the parents of Jesus, but do not imply that it never was broken in upon by sickness or other unavoidable casualties. To sum up the character of this new note in brief—such confusion of events, entirely distinct, and such cavils and inconclusive reasoning, can only reflect discredit upon its authors.

Having been thus again called upon, by the Editors' Note on Luke ii. 22, to expose their propensity to charge the narratives of the miraculous conception with an inconsistency, which is the offspring of their own blunders ; I shall also give some specimens of the arguments by which their two principal authorities, Mr. Pope and Dr. Priestley, attempt to impugn those narratives.

Mr. Pope asserts, " that the accounts of Matthew and Luke are perfectly *inconsistent with each other* ;—that Matthew's account of the vision to Joseph is inconsistent with Luke's silence on this head ;—that the wise men from the East in Matthew are the same as the shepherds in Luke ;—that Matthew's silence, as to the manger, is inconsistent with Luke's express narration of it ;—as, on the contrary, the particular narrative given by Matthew of the slaughter of the infants, is irreconcilable with

Luke's silence on this important and affecting circumstance." <sup>2</sup>

Here we meet with the old deistical objection to the Gospels, of "the silence of one book, upon matters related in the other." That the omission by one evangelist of a fact recorded by another, is a very insufficient ground of objection to the truth of the evangelical narratives, has been already shown in the introductory chapter and other parts of this work. If Matthew had said that Bethlehem was the usual place of Joseph's abode, or that Jesus was born in a private house at Bethlehem; and if, on the other hand, Luke had said that Jesus was born at Joseph's house at Nazareth; the two narratives would have contradicted each other. But how is the fact? Instead of contradiction, there is not a single circumstance recorded by one evangelist, inconsistent with the narrative in the other;—no chronological difficulty to prevent an harmony between them: which is such an improbable coincidence between two forged narratives, not written in concert, that, considered as forgeries, they would be greater miracles than considered as authentic accounts of real transactions. No wonder therefore that an objector to such narratives should confound a visit to Jesus, immediately after his birth, whilst laying in a manger, by some Jewish shepherds, with a visit to him, several months

---

<sup>2</sup> Pope on the Miraculous Conception, p. 203.



afterwards, by certain wise men from the East. Thus the blindness of prejudice confounds the chronology of events and the most obvious distinctions.

Again, Mr. Pope says: "Dr. Priestley observes, that had the miraculous conception been a fact so well attested as it is represented, 'the eyes of all the country must have been fixed on Jesus as the promised Messiah; and all attempts to conceal it, after his public appearance, would have come too late.'"<sup>3</sup> Mr. Nisbett had objected to the above argument, "the meanness of Christ's appearance." In reply, Mr. Pope says, "the meanness of Christ's appearance would have vanished in their ideas had the Jews been acquainted with his miraculous conception. They would not have regarded him as the son of Joseph and Mary, though born in their house; but as the appointed Saviour, who was manifested to them in so distinguished a manner; and, instead of treating his human parents with disrespect, they would have considered them as objects of peculiar attention; they would have made particular inquiries into their birth and family, and not have failed to trace this illustrious infant to his great progenitor, David, from whom, their prophets had taught them, he should descend."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, according to Mr. Pope, the miraculous conception would not have prevented the Jews from

---

<sup>3</sup> Pope on the Miraculous Conception. "Theol. Rep. ubi sup. p. 296. History of Early Opinions, Vol. IV. pp. 66," and p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> Pope on the Miraculous Conception, pp. 197, 198.

tracing "this illustrious infant to his great progenitor, David." Here Mr. Pope and the Editors are at variance, and it must be left to the latter to reconcile them with each other.

The argument of Dr. Priestley and Mr. Pope is not that the miraculous conception was not calculated to effect any useful purpose, that it deprived Christ of his descent from David, but that it does not appear to have answered the purpose for which it was so admirably calculated. This objection assumes a position that is contradicted by matter of fact. It assumes that the Jews were open to conviction, had they sufficient proof of the divine mission of Christ as the Messiah. If such were the disposition of the Jews, how was it that the astonishing miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus produced no other effect on the minds of their rulers than to stimulate them to a conspiracy against the life of Jesus? We cannot for a moment suppose, that a principle of fear prevented Jesus, who had all power in heaven and earth, who could with his word smite his enemies to the ground, (John xviii. 5 and 6,) from more explicitly announcing himself to the Jews as the Messiah. It did not consist with divine wisdom that there should be such an announcement till the disciples had received power from on high, by the descent of the Holy Spirit, to promulgate the new dispensation of the Gospel to every creature under heaven. (Compare Luke xxiv. 45—49; John xv. 26, 27; Acts i. 4, 5, and 8;

with Acts ii. 1 to 40.) It is therefore no objection to the miraculous conception that it did not produce an effect never designed by it.

Mr. Pope has other remarks of a similar complexion with those I have already noticed in the course of this work. It is not necessary to detain the reader with animadversions on them. I shall only give one more extract from Dr. Priestley, given by Mr. Pope. "According to all appearance," says the Doctor, "if the doctrine of the miraculous conception be true, God wrought a most extraordinary miracle without any proper object or use. Nay, as far as we can judge, such a *pretension* as that of a miraculous birth, unless it had been more particularly authenticated than the Gospel history represents this to have been, must have operated greatly to the prejudice of our Saviour's character, and consequently must have obstructed the end of his mission. For, without the most circumstantial evidence, for which no provision was made, the story of the miraculous conception would never have been believed by the Jews."<sup>5</sup>

When Dr. Priestley says that the miraculous conception was without any proper object or use, he assumes the point in debate, that Unitarianism is the doctrine of the Gospel; but waving this consideration, it will suffice to remark, that this

---

<sup>5</sup> Pope on the Miraculous Conception, p. 55. Priestley's History of Early Opinions, Vol. IV. p. 24.

passage from Dr. Priestley is not quite consistent with the passage before quoted from him, in which he says, that the miraculous conception is represented as so well attested, that, if true, it must have commanded the belief of the Jews in Jesus as the Messiah.

If the disciples of Unitarianism would place less implicit reliance on the decisions of their leaders, and think and examine for themselves, we might hope that when their writers are betrayed into such inconsistencies in their arguments, they would be induced to inquire, whether theological prejudices and a party spirit did not more influence their biblical researches, than a pure zeal for divine truth.

There is a peculiarity which distinguishes the Sacred Records from all profane writings, too much overlooked by the Unitarian, in his theological inquiries. And as a disregard to this peculiarity has proved a fruitful source of error, I shall close this Work with a few remarks upon it.

The Sacred Histories, although circumstantial, are brief; and so far are they from enlarging on all the remarkable and miraculous events, or expatiating on the virtues of the most eminent characters, that they give a plain unexaggerated description of only some of the former; and, unlike profane history or biography, no veil is thrown over the defects of the latter, which are, without any

concealment or palliation, placed on record. When histories are laconic, they must necessarily omit events, more or less important; and when there are two or more histories of the same period, variations, through omissions or additions, will almost unavoidably occur between them. To illustrate this observation, the reader may compare the First and Second Books of Samuel with the First Book of Chronicles, and the First and Second Books of Kings with the Second Book of Chronicles.

When Justin Martyr calls the Gospels *memoirs*, he gives them a name, which appears more appropriate to the nature of their composition, than that of *histories*. Variations, through omissions or additions, or both, are therefore more likely to occur in them than in regular histories.

A simplicity and conciseness of narrative, a freedom from panegyric, is as conspicuous a trait in the historical books of the New Testament, as in those of the Old. It is this trait in the introductory chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, which has been seized upon by the Unitarian, to give plausibility to his objections to the accounts of the miraculous conception. The same trait has supplied the Deist with objections against the truth of the accounts given by the evangelists of the resurrection of Christ, and of his subsequent appearances to his disciples. Their remarkable brevity gives, to a superficial reader, the appearance of a much greater

discrepancy between the narratives of the resurrection and ascension, than any which the Unitarian can, with all his industry and pains-taking, produce against the two accounts of the miraculous conception. Had not Luke informed us, in the Acts of the Apostles, we should not have discovered, from any thing that appears in the Gospels, that forty days had elapsed between the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Had not St. Paul informed us, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, we should not have learned, either from the Gospels, or from the Acts, the important fact, that Christ was seen after his resurrection by above five hundred disciples at once: the light reflected on the Gospel narratives, by this additional information, assists to remove the appearance of discrepancy, by proving that the evangelists did not even attempt to record all the proofs which Christ gave of his resurrection. Here is a striking illustration of the contrast to which I have adverted, between the profane and sacred historian. The former, not content with the sober realities of history, has recourse to fictitious colouring; embellishes the portrait of his hero with the colours of his own fancy, and prudently throws his defects into the shade; whereas the latter, properly impressed with the dignity of his subject, neglects the arts practised by the former, to incite the admiration of the reader, and to magnify in his view the character of the hero of his piece.

The Sacred Historian appears, indeed, humanly speaking, so regardless of those arts, to which an ordinary writer would have had recourse, in order to make a favourable impression on his reader, that we are obliged to seek for some cause beyond human wisdom or policy, to account for his conduct. This cause is to be found in the doctrine of divine inspiration, which places the judgment of the writer under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and restrains him from penning down more of facts or of discourses than divine wisdom saw meet to transmit to posterity; and the traits of which I have been speaking, are so impressed on all the Sacred Writings, as to distinguish them more widely from all compositions merely human, than any of these are distinguished from each other.

FINIS.

## Works in Divinity,

LATELY PUBLISHED BY F. C. & J. RIVINGTON,

*St. Paul's Church Yard, and Waterloo Place, Pall Mall.*



1. The OLD TESTAMENT, arranged on the Basis of Lightfoot's Chronicle, in Historical and Chronological Order, in such Manner, that the Books, Chapters, Psalms, Prophecies, &c. may be read as one connected History, in the very Words of the Authorized Translation. To the above are added, Six Indexes. By the Rev. GEORGE TOWNSEND, M.A. of Trinity College, Cambridge. In Two very large Volumes, 8vo. 1*l.* 16*s.*

*Extract from Mr. Horne's new edition of his Introduction to the Critical Study of the Holy Scriptures, vol. ii. page 402, and Supplement to the first edition, page 139.*

"The writer of these pages, on the completion of the present work, proposed to himself to attempt a harmony of the entire Bible. This laborious undertaking has been happily rendered unnecessary, as it respects the Old Testament, by Mr. Townsend's Arrangement. This beautifully printed, and carefully executed work, is indispensably necessary to those who are preparing for the sacred office. The notes are very appropriate, and possess the rare merit of compressing a great variety of valuable information into a small compass."

\*.\* The New Testament, arranged on the same Plan, is preparing for the Press.

2. A SUMMARY of CHRISTIAN FAITH and PRACTICE, confirmed by References to the Text of Holy Scripture, compared with the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies of the Church of England; and illustrated by Extracts from the chief of those Works which received the Sanction of Public Authority, from the Time of the Reformation, to the final Revision of the established Formularies. By the Rev. E. J. BURROW, D.D. F.R. & L.S. 3 vols. 12mo. 1*l.* 1*s.*

"In these Volumes, the young divine, who is free from party-feeling, will find a concentrated digest of much that is necessary for him to acquire, for the due discharge of his sacred function; and he will besides be directed to those venerable sources of inquiry, which, properly pursued, and soberly digested, will at once enlarge his professional views, improve his professional learning, and increase, by God's blessing, his personal piety."—*Scottish Episcopal Review and Magazine, for June 1822.*

3. The SCRIPTURE TESTIMONIES of the DIVINITY of OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, collected and illustrated. To which are added, a List of Authors consulted, and an Index to the Texts. By the Rev. GEORGE HOLDEN, M. A.

"The reader need not be told that this is a learned work; but he has no occasion to apprehend that it is a work intended only for Scholars, and professed Theologians. The passages extracted will be sufficient to shew, that the Author has used his talents so skilfully, that the full strength of his argument may be appreciated by any man of common understanding and ordinary attention."—*Christian Remembrancer, March 1822.*



4. **THE CLERICAL GUIDE**, or Ecclesiastical Directory; containing a complete Register of the present Prelates and other Dignitaries of the Church of England; of the Heads of Houses, Professors, &c. of the Universities, and other Colleges and Public Schools; a List of all the Benefices and Chapelries in England and Wales, arranged alphabetically in their several Counties, Dioceses, Archdeaconries, &c. The names of their respective Incumbents, with the Date of their Institution, the Names of the Patrons, &c. &c. And an Appendix, containing Alphabetical Lists of those Benefices which are in the Patronage of the Crown, the Bishops, Deans and Chapters, and other Public Bodies. Second Edition, corrected, royal 8vo. 17. 2s.

5. An **ESSAY** on the **SCRIPTURE DOCTRINES** of **ADULTERY** and **Divorce**; and on the Criminal character and Punishment of Adultery by the ancient Laws of England and other Countries. Being a Subject proposed for Investigation, by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge in the Diocese of St. David's, and to which that Society awarded its Premium (by a Benefaction) of Fifty Pounds, in Dec. 1821. By H. V. TEBBS, Proctor in Doctor's Commons. 8vo. 7s.

6. An **ATTEMPT** to **ILLUSTRATE** those **ARTICLES** of the **CHURCH** of **ENGLAND**, which the Calvinists improperly consider as Calvinistical, in Eight Sermons, preached before the University of Oxford, in the Year 1804, at the Lecture founded by J. Bampton, M. A. Canon of Salisbury, with copious Notes. By the Right Rev. **RICHARD LAURENCE**, LL. D. Archbishop of Cashel. A New Edition. 8vo. 12s.

7. **ANNOTATIONS** on the **FOUR GOSPELS**, and the **ACTS** of the **APOSTLES**. Compiled and abridged for the Use of Students. Fourth Edition. 3 vols. 8vo. 17. 4s.

8. **ANNOTATIONS** on the **EPISTLES**; being a Continuation of the above, and principally designed for the Use of Candidates for Holy Orders. By the Rev. **JAMES SLADE**, M. A. late Fellow and Tutor of Emanuel College, Cambridge, and examining Chaplain to the Lord Bishop of Chester. 2 vols. 8vo. 16s.

9. A **COURSE OF LECTURES**, containing a Description and Systematic Arrangement of the several Branches of Divinity; accompanied with an Account both of the principal Authors, and of the Progress which has been made, at different Periods, in Theological Learning. By **HERBERT MARSH**, D. D. F. S. A. Lord Bishop of Peterborough, and Margaret Professor of Divinity. Part VI. (on the Credibility of the New Testament.) 2s. 6d.

10. The **SAME WORK**, Part V. (on the Authenticity of the New Testament). 8vo. 2s. 6d.

11. The **SAME WORK**. Part IV. (on the Interpretation of Prophecy). 2s. 6d.

12. **PROOFS** of **INSPIRATION**, or the Grounds of Distinction between the New Testament and the Apocryphal Volume; occasioned by the recent publication of the Apocryphal New Testament by Hone. By the Rev. **THOMAS RENNELL**, B. D. F. R. S. 8vo. 6s.

"Mr. Rennell has, by this Publication, done essential service to the cause of true Religion, and produced an able Exposition of a very intricate Argument."—*Monthly Censor*, for June 1822.

13. THE BOOK of COMMON PRAYER, with Notes Explanatory, Practical, and Historical, from approved Writers of the Church of England, selected and arranged, by the Right Rev. RICHARD MANT, D.D. Lord Bishop of Killaloe. In one large Volume, Quarto. The Second Edition. 1*l.* 16*s.*; or on Royal Paper, 3*l.* 12*s.*

14. PRACTICAL LECTURES upon the GOSPEL of ST. JOHN. Part I. comprising the Six First Chapters. With a Supplement. By the Rev. JOHN ROGERS PITMAN, M.A. Alternate Morning Preacher at Belgrave and Berkeley Chapels; and Alternate Evening Preacher at the Foundling and Magdalen Hospitals. Second Edition. 8vo. 16*s.* 6*d.* bds.

\*.\* *The Supplement may be had separately, price 4*s.**

15. A CONCORDANCE to the HOLY BIBLE; to which is added a GEOGRAPHICAL INDEX, with the Calendar and Table of Lessons; designed to accompany any Quarto Edition of the Bible, and adapted to the Maps and Notes of the FAMILY BIBLE, published under the Direction of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Edited by JAMES W. BELLAMY, M.A. Rector of the United Parishes of St. Mary Abchurch, and St. Laurence Pountney, and Prebendary of St. Paul's. Price 4*s.* on Medium, and 7*s.* on Royal Paper.

\*.\* Another Edition. Royal 8vo. Price 8*s.*

16. INTRODUCTION to the NEW TESTAMENT. By Sir JOHN DAVID MICHAELIS, late Professor of the University of Gottingen, &c. Translated from the Fourth Edition of the German, and considerably augmented with Notes. By the Right Rev. HERBERT MARSH, D.D. F.R.S. Lord Bishop of Peterborough. The Third Edition. In 6 vols. 8vo. 3*l.* 3*s.*

17. A KEY to the OLD TESTAMENT and APOCRYPHA; or an Account of their several Books, their Contents, Authors, &c. By the Rev. ROBERT GRAY, D.D. Prebendary of Durham and Chichester, and Rector of Bishop Wearmouth. Seventh Edition. 8vo. 13*s.*

18. A KEY to the NEW TESTAMENT, giving an Account of the several Books, their Contents, Authors, &c. By the Right Rev. THOMAS PERCY, D.D. Late Bishop of Dromore. Seventh Edition. 8vo. 3*s.* 6*d.*

\*.\* The two last-mentioned Works form a complete Key to the Holy Scriptures, and may be had together in One Vol. 8vo. Price 16*s.* boards.

19. The CONNECTION between the SACRED WRITINGS and the LITERATURE of JEWISH and HEATHEN AUTHORS, particularly that of the Classical Ages: illustrated principally with a View to Evidence in Confirmation of the Truth of Revealed Religion. By ROBERT GRAY, D.D. Prebendary of Durham and Chichester, and Rector of Bishop Wearmouth. The Second Edition, corrected and enlarged. 2 vols. 8vo. 1*l.* 1*s.*

20. ECCLESIASTICAL BIOGRAPHY; or Lives of eminent Men connected with the History of Religion in England, from the Commencement of the Reformation to the Revolution. Selected and illustrated with Notes. By CHRISTOPHER WORDSWORTH, D.D. Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. The Second Edition. 6 vols. 8vo. 3*l.* 12*s.*

## WORKS IN DIVINITY.

---

21. The **THEOLOGICAL** and **MISCELLANEOUS WORKS** of the late Rev. **WILLIAM JONES**; with a Short Account of his Life and Writings. By **W. STEVENS, Esq.** 6 vols. 8vo. 3*l.* 3*s.*

22. The **WORKS** of the Rev. **THOMAS ZOUCH, D.D. F.L.S.** Rector of Scrayingham, and Prebendary of Durham. With a Memoir of his Life. By the Rev. **FRANCIS WRANGHAM, M.A. F.R.S.** Archdeacon of Cleveland. In Two large Volumes, 8vo. 1*l.* 4*s.*

23. **BIBLICAL CRITICISM** on the First Fourteen Books of the Old Testament; also on the First Nine Prophetical Books. By **SAMUEL HORSLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. F.A.S.** late Lord Bishop of St. Asaph. 4 vols. 8vo. 2*l.* 2*s.*

24. The **BOOK of PSALMS**; translated from the Hebrew; with Notes, explanatory and critical. By the same Author. Second Edition. 2 vols. 8vo. 18*s.*

25. The **SCHOLAR ARMED** against the **ERRORS** of the **TIME**; or a Collection of Tracts on the Principles and Evidences of Christianity, the Constitution of the Church, and the Authority of Civil Government. The whole intended for the Information and Assistance of Young Students. A New Edition. 2 vols. 8vo. 1*l.* 4*s.*

26. The **CHURCHMAN ARMED** against the **ERRORS** of the **TIME**; containing Extracts from various Authors, arranged under Five Heads. Part I. On the Constitution of the Church of Christ, on the Ministerial Commission, and on the Unity to be preserved in the Church. Part II. Ecclesiastical Establishments and Tests. Part III. Church of England. Part IV. Popery. Part V. Toleration.

By "The Society for the Distribution of Tracts, in Defence of the United Church of England and Ireland, as by Law established." 3 vols. 8vo. 1*l.* 5*s.* 6*d.*

27. **DISCOURSES**, chiefly Doctrinal, delivered in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin. By **BARTHOLOMEW LLOYD, D.D. S.F.T.C.D. M.R.I.A.** Professor of Mathematics in the University, and Chaplain to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. 8vo. 10*s.* 6*d.*

"This Volume possesses much interest to the Theological Student. The Author's researches have taken a comprehensive range, and this arrangement is clear and perspicuous. He is fully acquainted with his subject, and in earnest in enforcing his convictions; whilst the object of his undertaking is constantly kept in view, to produce a preservative for minds not as yet infected, rather than a sanative for those already tainted with sectarian errors. We have little doubt that his efforts will be accepted, as of much service to the cause he has espoused."—*Monthly Censor, August 1822.*

28. **SERMONS**, by the late Rev. **JOHN BOUCHER, M.A.** some time Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford; Vicar of Kirknewton; and Rector of Shaftesbury. Second Edition. 12mo. 7*s.*

"They are for the most part, plain and parochial Discourses, upon some important subjects of practical religion. The Author was a man of superior talents, and of sound learning; of the highest principles, and the most consistent and exemplary conduct. His views of the pastoral office were of a very serious and exalted nature; and his religious sentiments in strict conformity with those of the Church, of which he was a faithful and conscientious minister."—*Extract from the Preface.*

June, 1822.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS,

PRINTED FOR AND SOLD BY

**F. C. AND J. RIVINGTON,**

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,

AND WATERLOO-PLACE, PALL-MALL.

### THE ANNUAL REGISTER;

OR,

**A View of the  
HISTORY, POLITICS, & LITERATURE,  
FOR THE YEAR 1820,**

Including a Sketch of the Character of his  
late Majesty.

In one large volume 8vo. price 18s.

The respectable Editor of the Quarterly Journal, entitled, "The Scottish Episcopal Review and Magazine," has, in the Number for March, given the following account of this Volume.

"There is much information and amusement in this stately volume,—more, indeed, of both, than we have met with in any similar work these many years. The events of 1820, no doubt, were of the most interesting nature. The death of one King, the accession of another, and, above all, the trial of Queen Caroline, give a degree of variety and importance to the annals of that period, which, for the sake of national tranquillity, we can have no wish to see repeated.

"The character of our late Sovereign, and the political features of his reign, are given with great ability and fairness. The history, too, of the Bill of Pains and Penalties, to which we have just alluded, is narrated with striking impartiality: the facts of the case being candidly given, and the speeches on both sides reported with an equal fulness and accuracy. In regard to France, Spain, Portugal, and Naples, the progress of the revolutionary spirit, still so active among our neighbours, is traced with an able pen, and connected throughout with the symptoms, every where so prevalent, of a new era of political conflict with which Europe appears to be threatened.

"The 'Chronicle' derives its chief merit from the judicious abridgment of its Miscellaneous Notices. The conspiracy of Thistlewood and his adherents, as well as the subsequent trial and execution of these brutal anarchists, already fast becoming a mere historical reminiscence, occupy, of course, a conspicuous place in it.

"The 'Philosophical and Literary' department, is a great improvement on the plan of the work in general, and, in the present volume, exhibits a mass of information not any where to be found condensed in the same compass. Every thing remarkable, brought to light, during the year 1820, in the several branches of Natural History, Chemistry, Antiquities, Statistics, and general learning, is here accurately described and recorded.

"But we are particularly pleased with the liberal and manly spirit which pervades the whole work. There is no party bias manifested, no animosity against individuals, whatever be their views or opi-

[1]

nions; and there is every where conspicuous the love of country, founded upon a just perception of our invaluable privileges as British subjects, as well as of the manifold hazards attending precipitate innovation in the principles of government. In short, it is a work to which we cannot too heartily wish success."

The Editor of "The British Critic," in the Number for April last, gives the following commendation.

"We have never opened any similar volume so thoroughly according with the notions which we have framed to ourselves of what an Annual Register ought to be, as that which is now before us.

"We heartily rejoice to find a work of so much importance, conducted with so much judgment and diligence; and we doubt not, that the succeeding volumes will fully realize the high promise held out by the present."

\* \* The Volume for 1821 is preparing for Publication, and will be ready on the 2nd of December next.

### HORTUS ANGLICUS;

OR,

#### The Modern English Garden;

Containing an easy Description of all the Plants which are cultivated in the Climate of Great Britain, either for Use or Ornament, and of a Selection from the established Favourites of the Stove and Green-house; arranged according to the System of Linnæus; including his Generic and Specific Characters; with Remarks on the Properties of the more valuable Species.

By the Author of the BRITISH BOTANIST.

"Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue  
Appeared, with gay enamelled colours mixed." Milton

In two Volumes, 12mo. (nearly ready.)

### PROOFS OF INSPIRATION;

OR, THE

#### FOUNDATIONS OF DISTINCTION

between the

*New Testament & the Apocryphal Volume;*

Occasioned by the recent publication of the Apocryphal New Testament by Hone.

BY THE

Rev. THOMAS RENNELL, B.D. F.R.S.

8vo. Price 6s.

## **The Clerical Guide,**

OR,  
**ECCLESIASTICAL DIRECTORY ;**

Containing a complete Register of the present Prelates and other Dignitaries of the Church of England ; of the Heads of Houses, Professors, &c. of the Universities, and other Colleges and Public Schools ; a List of all the Benefices and Chapelries in England and Wales, arranged alphabetically in their several Counties, Dioceses, Archdeaconries, &c. ; the Names of their respective Incumbents, with the Date of their Institution, the Names of their Patrons, &c. &c. And an Appendix, containing Alphabetical Lists of those Benefices, which are in the Patronage of the Crown, the Bishops, Deans, and Chapters, and other Public Bodies. Second Edition, corrected. Royal 8vo. 1l. 2s.

.....

### **A DEFENCE OF THE CLERGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,**

Stating their Services, their Rights, and their Revenue, from the earliest Ages to the present Times ; and shewing the Relation in which they stand to the Community and to the Agriculturist.

By the Rev. FRANCIS THACKERAY.

8vo. Price 5s. 6d.

.....

### **DISCOURSES, Chiefly Doctrinal,**

Delivered in the Chapel of Trinity College,  
Dublin.

By BARTHOLOMEW LLOYD, D.D. S.F.T. C.D.  
M.R.I.A.

Professor of Mathematics in the University, and  
Chaplain to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant  
of Ireland.

8vo. Price 10s. 6d.

.....

### **SERMONS**

On the Public Means of Grace ; the Fasts and Festivals of the Church ; on Scripture Characters, and various Practical Subjects.

By the late Rt. Rev. THEODORE DEHON, D.D.  
Rector of St. Michael's Church, Charleston ; and  
Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in  
the Diocese of South Carolina.

Together with some Account of the Author, and a  
Sermon preached on Occasion of his Death.

Two Volumes, 8vo. Price 1l. 1s.

.....

### **CONTEMPLATIONS**

ON THE

**Last Discourses of our Blessed Saviour  
With his Disciples,**

As recorded in the Gospel of St. John.

By the Rev. JOHN BREWSTER, M.A.  
Rector of Egglecliffe, Durham.

8vo. Price 10s. 6d.

[c]

## **AN ESSAY ON THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINES OF**

### **ADULTERY AND DIVORCE ;**

And on the Criminal Character and Punishment of Adultery by the Ancient Laws of England and other Countries : being a Subject proposed for Investigation by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in the Diocese of St. David's, and to which that Society awarded its Premium (by Benefaction) of Fifty Pounds, in December, 1821.

By H. V. TEBBS,

Proctor in Doctors' Commons.

8vo. Price 7s.

.....

### **A SUMMARY**

OF

### **CHRISTIAN FAITH AND PRACTICE,**

Confirmed by References to the Text of Holy Scripture ; compared with the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies of the Church of England ; and illustrated by Extracts from the Chief of those Works which received the Sanction of Public Authority, from the Time of the Reformation, to the final Revision of the established Formularies.

By the Rev. E. J. BURROW, D.D. F.R. & L.S.

Three Volumes. 12mo. Price 1l. 1s.

.....

### **BISHOP MARSH'S THEOLOGICAL LECTURES,**

Part the Sixth (On the Credibility of the New Testament). 8vo. Price 2s. 6d. Also

The Fifth Part (On the Authenticity of the New Testament). Price 2s. 6d. And

The Fourth Part (On the Interpretation of Prophecy.) Price 2s. 6d.

.....

### **A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition**

FOR ANY

### **CHRISTIAN YOUTH ;**

Set forth in a Series of Sunday School Lectures, with a Catechism, or Preaching Conference, on the Doctrines and Principles of the Church of Christ, adapted to each Lecture : to which is prefixed, a View of popular Education, from the Reformation to the present Times.

By the Rev. J. TRIST, A.M.

Vicar of Veyan, Cornwall.

Four Volumes, 12mo. Price 1l. 4s.

.....

### **THE PROTESTANT BEADSMAN ;**

Or, a Series of Biographical Notices and Hymns, commemorating the Saints and Martyrs, whose Holidays are kept by the Church of England ; to which is appended, a brief Review of the Scriptural and Traditionary Accounts of the Holy Angels.

12mo. Price 6s.

**THE  
NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY,**

Undertaken in the Years 1819, 1820, and 1821, through France, Italy, Savoy, Switzerland, part of Germany, bordering on the Rhine, Holland, and the Netherlands; comprising Incidents that occurred to the Author, who has long suffered under a total Deprivation of Sight; with various Points of Information collected on his Tour.

By JAMES HOLMAN, R.N. and K.W.

With a Portrait of the Author.

8vo. 13s.

**THE  
Broad Stone of Honour;**

OR,

*Rules for the Gentlemen of England.*

12mo. 7s. 6d. or on fine paper, 9s.

**THE WORKS**

OF THE

**RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE,**

Volume the Seventh in Quarto. Containing his Speeches in Westminster Hall, on the Impeachment of Mr. Hastings. 2l. 2s. Also Vols. 13, 14, in 8vo. containing the same, price 1l. 1s. on royal paper, 1l. 8s.

\*. The 4th, 5th, and 6th Volumes in Quarto, may be had to complete that edition, price 7l. 7s.

**AN ACCOUNT OF A PLAN,**

Which has been successfully pursued for  
Three Years, in the conducting of a

**Saving Bank for Children,**

With the Addition of a Working Fund for Females; including Directions and Patterns for cutting out every Sort of Wearing Apparel for Girls, Shirts and Pinafores for Boys, and Linen usually lent to the Poor, together with the Price allowed for making each Article.

4to. 5s.

**THE  
COTTAGER'S  
AGRICULTURAL COMPANION,**

Comprising a complete System of Cottage Agriculture; intended to instruct the Poor of Great Britain in the best Arts of Cottage Husbandry.

By WILLIAM SALISBURY.

12mo. 2s.

**THE  
COTTAGER'S COMPANION,**

Or, a Complete System of Cottage Horticulture; intended to instruct the industrious Poor of Great Britain in the Art of Cottage Gardening.

By the same Author.

Second Edition. 12mo. 1s. 6d.

[3]

**THOUGHTS**

ON THE

**DEFECTIVE STATE OF PRISONS,**

and

*Suggestions for their Improvement;*

Together with Hints for the Discipline, Police, and Labour of Prisoners. With the Plan of a Gaol and House of Correction for the Accommodation and Labour of 280 Persons.

By THOMAS LE BRETON,

(Late Captain in the 71st Regt. and Paymaster of Detachments of the Forces.) Keeper of the County Gaol, and Governor of the House of Correction at St. Augustine's, near Canterbury.

8vo. 7s.

THE

**Cottager's  
MONTHLY VISITOR,**

FOR THE YEAR 1821,

Volume the First, price 6s. in boards, or 6s. 6d. neatly half-bound; or any single Number at 6d.

(To be continued Monthly.)

"The volume before us is a very useful, well-managed publication, filled with a variety of information more or less valuable; discussing subjects that come closely home to the concerns, thoughts, and anxieties, of the labouring classes; suggesting plans of economy, and directing how to turn to the best account the opportunities and small advantages of their station. It is a publication that was much wanted. We recommend it heartily, and exhort our benevolent friends to promote its circulation in the country to the utmost of their power."

Extract from "The Inquirer," No. 1, for April, 1822.

**AN ACCOUNT**

OF A

**New Process in Painting,**

IN TWO PARTS.

Part I. Containing Remarks on its general Correspondence with the Peculiarities of the Venetian School.

Part II. Supplementary Details, explanatory of the Process; with Miscellaneous Observations on the Arts of the Sixteenth Century.

8vo. 8s.

"It has fallen to our lot, since we commenced our labours, to recommend to the attention of our readers, a great variety of what are called important publications; but we are very far from certain, and we wish to speak without exaggeration,—whether any work has been brought before our notice for many years, involving the possibility of more important results than is to be found in the small volume which now lies before us."

British Critic, Dec. 1821.

THE  
BRITISH BOTANIST:

or,  
*A Familiar Introduction to the Science of  
Botany,*

Explaining the Physiology of Vegetation, and the Principles both of the artificial and natural Systems of Linnaeus, and also the Arrangement of Jussieu; to which is added, a Synopsis, or View of the British Genera; in which the Derivation and Meaning of the Name of each Genus are given, the whole intended chiefly for the Use of Young Persons.

In 12mo. illustrated with 15 plates, price 7s. 6d. in boards, or with the plates coloured, 10s. 6d.

"In this Treatise we have one of the most unexceptionable preliminary guides that has fallen within the range of our cognisance; for it is perspicuous without prolixity, correct without pedantic formality, and comprehensive without intricacy or irrelevant discussion. Altogether, therefore, this publication promises to conduct the young ladies and gentlemen of our island into the Temple of Flora, without a greater expenditure of trouble or effort than they often bestow on the most frivolous amusements."

Monthly Review for Dec. 1821.

The Author of "Time's Telescope," in the Volume for 1822, also says, "It is far more comprehensive than other introductory books on this subject hitherto published."

THE  
**Pleasures of Fancy,**

A POEM,  
IN TWO PARTS.  
8vo. 4s. 6d.

THE  
**EXCURSIONS OF A SPIRIT,**  
WITH A  
**SURVEY OF THE PLANETARY WORLD:**  
A VISION.

With Four Illustrative Engravings.  
12mo. 5s.

"While this Volume is written to inculcate the necessity of serious views of life and religious habits, it displays considerable ingenuity."

Monthly Review, Dec. 1821.

THE  
**DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL**  
and the  
**ORDER OF ITS PREACHING**  
DEDUCED FROM SCRIPTURE HISTORY;

in  
*Discourses on the Apostolical Commission.*

By the Rev. J. G. TOLLEY.

8vo. 6s.

[4]

THE  
ANNUAL REGISTER;

or,  
**A View of the  
HISTORY, POLITICS, & LITERATURE.**

FOR THE YEAR 1797.

One large volume, 8vo. 1l. 4s.

†† The Volumes for the Years 1791 to 1796, in continuation of those published by Mr. Dodsley, may be had together, or separately, and the volume for 1798 will be published very soon.

THE  
ANNUAL REGISTER;

or,  
**A View of the  
HISTORY, POLITICS, & LITERATURE,**

FOR THE YEAR 1810.

One large volume, 8vo. 1l.

†† The volumes for the Years 1801 to 1809, being the commencement of the Second Series, may also be had, and the Volume for 1811 is preparing for publication.

**EIGHTEEN SERMONS**

Intended to establish the inseparable Connection between the Doctrine and Practice of Christianity. (Dedicated, by Permission, to the Lord Bishop of St. David's.)

12mo. 5s.

**SIXTEEN VILLAGE SERMONS,**

on  
CERTAIN PARTS OF THE CHRISTIAN  
CHARACTER.

By the Rev. EDWARD BERENS, M.A.

12mo. 4s.

**ELEVEN VILLAGE SERMONS,**

on the  
**Chief Articles of Faith.**

and on the  
MEANS OF GRACE.

By the same Author.

Fifth Edition. 12mo. 2s. 6d.

**EIGHT LECTURES,**

on the  
**Offices of the Church of England.**

By the same Author.

12mo. 2s.

## PRACTICAL LECTURES

upon the

### GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

Part I. Comprising the six first Chapters.

By the Rev. JOHN ROGERS PITMAN, M.A.

Alternate Morning Preacher at Belgrave and Berkeley Chapels; and alternate Evening Preacher at the Foundling and Magdalen Hospitals.

Second Edition, with a Supplement-

8vo. 16s. 6d.

†† The Supplement is sold separately, price 4s.

THE

## OLD TESTAMENT.

Arranged on the Basis of Lightfoot's Chronicle, in Historical and Chronological Order, in such Manner, that the Books, Chapters, Psalms, Prophecies, &c. may be read as one connected History, in the very Words of the Authorized Translation. To the above are added Six Indexes.

By the Rev. GEORGE TOWNSEND, M.A.

Of Trinity College, Cambridge.

In Two very large Volumes, 8vo. 11. 16s.

Extract from Mr. Horne's new Edition of his Introduction to the Critical Study of the Holy Scriptures, vol. ii. page 502, and Supplement to the first edition, page 139.

"The writer of these pages, on the completion of the present work, proposed to himself to attempt a Harmony of the entire Bible. This laborious undertaking has happily been rendered unnecessary as it respects the Old Testament, by Mr. Townsend's Arrangement. This beautifully printed, and carefully executed work, is indispensably necessary to those who are preparing for the sacred office. The notes are very appropriate, and possess the rare merit of compressing a great variety of valuable information into a small compass."

THE

## SCRIPTURE TESTIMONIES

to the

**Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Collected and illustrated. To which are added a List of Authors consulted, and an Index of Texts.

By the Rev. GEORGE HOLDEN, M.A.

8vo. 10s. 6d.

"The reader needs not be told that this is a learned work, but he has no occasion to apprehend that it is a work intended only for scholars and professed theologians. The passages extracted, will be sufficient to show, that the author has used his talents so skilfully that the full strength of his argument may be appreciated by any man of common understanding, and ordinary attention."

Christian Remembrancer, March, 1822.

## HELPS TO DEVOTION:

Or, Prayers, Praise, and Thanksgiving, in the entire Language of the Holy Scriptures.

By MARY ANNE DAVIS.

On a Plan suggested by the late Mrs. Brunton, of Edinburgh, in her posthumous Works.

12mo. 3s.

[5]

## Meditations

on

### THE SCRIPTURES;

Chiefly addressed to Young Persons, on the Importance of Religious Principles and Conduct:

By the Rev. RICHARD WALOND, A.M.

Rector of Weston under Penyard, and Treasurer of the Cathedral Church of Hereford.

"These Meditations are full of wisdom and piety, and appear extremely well calculated for warming the hearts of the young, and inspiring them with the love of virtue. Those on the 'Life and Character of Jesus,' possess many beauties, and will be read with delight—both by old and young."

Scottish Episcopal Review and Magazine, March, 1822.

THE

## RIGHTS OF SOVEREIGNTY

in

### CHRISTIAN STATES,

*Defended, in some Chief Particulars:*

#### A Charge

Delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of London, May 24th, 1821, with Dissertations and Collections illustrating the same Subject; with Reference to the Works of Mr. Hooker and Bishop Warburton; together with those of Grotius, De Marca, and others.

By JOSEPH HOLDEN POTT, A.M.

Vicar of St. Martin in the Fields, and Archdeacon of London.

Published by Desire of the Clergy present.

8vo. 9s.

## ILLUSTRATIVE REPLIES

in the

### FORM OF ESSAYS,

To the Questions proposed by the Right Reverend Herbert Marsh, Lord Bishop of Peterborough, to Candidates for Holy Orders; in which his Lordship's Interrogatories on Redemption, Original Sin, Free Will, Justification, Everlasting Salvation, Predestination, Regeneration, Renovation, and the Holy Trinity, are shewn to be constructed from the Holy Scriptures and the Articles of the Church of England.

Dedicated to the Lord Bishop of Peterborough.

8vo. 6s. 6d.

THE

## Village Preacher,

A Collection of short plain Sermons; partly original, partly selected, and adapted to Village Instruction.

By a Clergyman of the Church of England.

Vol. II. 12mo. 5s.

†† Also, a second Edition of Vol. I. 5s.



## SERMONS,

By the late Rev. JOHN BOUCHER, M.A.

Sometime Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford;  
Vicar of Kirknewton, and Rector of Shaftesbury.

Second Edition. 12mo. 7s.

"They are for the most part, plain and parochial Discourses upon some important subjects of practical religion. The Author was a man of superior talents, and of sound learning; of the highest principles, and the most consistent and exemplary conduct. His views of the pastoral office were of a very serious and exalted nature; and his religious sentiments in strict conformity with those of the Church of which he was a faithful and conscientious minister."

Extract from the Preface.

## DEISM

compared with

## CHRISTIANITY;

Being an Epistolary Correspondence, containing all the principal Objections against Revealed Religion, with the Answers annexed; in which is shewn the Insufficiency of the Arguments used in Support of Infidelity.

By EDWARD CHICHESTER, M.A.

Rector of the Parishes of Calclaff and Cloncha, in the Diocese of Derry.

Three Volumes, 8vo. 1l. 7s.

## A SUMMARY

of

### Orthodox Belief and Practice;

According to the Opinions and Sentiments of the first Reformers, intended for young Persons in the more educated Classes of Society: principally compiled from the celebrated Work of Dean Nowell.

By the Rev. JOHN PROWETT, A.M.

Late Fellow of New College, Oxford; Rector of Edberton, Sussex.

12mo. 3s. 6d.

## FAMILIAR DIALOGUES

on

### INTERESTING SUBJECTS,

Intended for the Amusement and Instruction of Young Ladies in their Hours of Leisure, on Sundays.

By a LADY.

18mo. 3s. half-bound.

## THE MORALIST;

or,

*Essays on the Means of moral Education;*

Addressed to Parents.

By the Rev. JOHN PHILLIPS POTTER, M.A.

12mo. 4s.

[3]

## THE NATURAL HISTORY

of

## BRITISH QUADRUPEDS,

With Figures, accompanied by Scientific and General Descriptions of all the Species that are known to inhabit the British Isles: including as well those found in a wild as in the domesticated State; and also such as are clearly authenticated to have been originally indigenous, but are now extirpated, or become extremely rare. The whole arranged in systematic Order, after the manner of Linnæus.

By E. DONOVAN, F.L.S. W.S.

With coloured plates, in 3 volumes royal 8vo. price 5l. 8s. in boards; or in 12 Parts, at 9s. each, which may be had, by one or more at a time.

Also, by the same Author,

The Natural History of BRITISH INSECTS; in 16 volumes royal 8vo. with coloured plates, price 24l. 16s. in boards, or in 66 Parts, at 7s. 6d. each.

The Natural History of BRITISH BIRDS; in 10 volumes royal 8vo. 18l. in boards; or in 40 Parts, at 9s. each.

The Natural History of BRITISH FISHES; in 5 volumes royal 8vo. 10l. 10s. in boards; or 20 Parts, at 10s. 6d. each.

The Natural History of BRITISH SHELLS; in 5 volumes royal 8vo. 7l. 15s. in boards, or 20 Parts, at 7s. 6d. each.

## GILBERT'S

### Chart of the Episcopacy

of

### ENGLAND AND WALES;

Exhibiting, in one Point of View, the Succession of Bishops in their respective Sees, and the Number of Bishops in the respective Reigns of our Kings, from the Time of Henry the VIIIth to the present Day, with the Dates of their Consecration, and their abbreviated Latin Signatures. The Columns containing the Succession of Bishops are surmounted by the Arms of each See, very beautifully printed on large imperial Paper, with the Armorial Bearings of the Archbishops and Bishops, handsomely engraved, in the Line Manner, blazoned, and mounted on Rollers.

Price 1l. 1s.

## FAMILIAR SERMONS,

on

*Several of the Doctrines and Duties of  
the Christian Religion.*

By the Rev. WILLIAM BARROW, LL.D. & F.A.S.

Prebendary of the Collegiate Church of Southwell, and Vicar of Farnsfield, in the County of Nottingham.

Vol. III. 8vo. 10s. 6d.

Also, by the same Author,

The two first Volumes of FAMILIAR SERMONS. Price 1l. 1s.

FAMILIAR DISSERTATIONS on Theological and Moral Subjects. 8vo. 10s. 6d.

An ESSAY ON EDUCATION; in which are particularly considered the Merits and Defects of the Discipline and Instruction in our Academies. Second Edition. 2 vols. 12mo. 9s.











*Acme*  
Bookbinding Co., Inc.  
100 Cambridge St.  
Charlestown, MA 02129



\_\_\_\_\_





